

FRANCE
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
AMERICAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY

The Myth of French Interference
(1783-1784)



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MOST REVEREND JOHN CARROLL
First Archbishop of Baltimore

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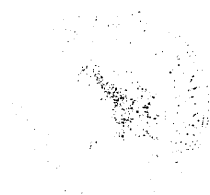
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The Myth of French Interference
(1783-1784)

BY
JULES A. BAISNÉE



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"Certainly, if produced separately without its connection and the realistic setting of its lights and shades, the statements, implications and insinuations which belong to [a document] are to the extent of their detachment from supplementary facts, serenely independent as well of control as possibly of truth."

T. HUGHES in *The History of the
Society of Jesus in North America*, I: 1158.

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INTRODUCTION

No period in the history of a nation or of an organization is more fascinating than that of its origin, and, for its members, no task is more sacred and inviting than that of searching and describing in their most minute details the events which marked its birth, and the influences which helped to shape its destiny; hence the multitude of recent researches into the origin of the American Colonies, the great ordeal of the War of Independence, and of the first working out of democratic institutions in the United States, hence also, on the part of American Catholics, the number of historical studies on the early missions and the causes and vicissitudes of the growth of the Church on the American Continent.

One problem—the establishment of the Catholic hierarchy—has particularly engaged the attention of Catholic historians in the United States. As early as 1844, Bernard U. Campbell dealt with it in his "Memoirs and Times of the Most Reverend John Carroll," published serially in the *United States Catholic Magazine*; in 1856, John Gilmary Shea gave his first version of the event in an enlarged edition of Henry de Courcy's *The Catholic Church in the United States. Pages of its History*, and in 1888, the same historian devoted to it two long chapters of his *Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll, Bishop and First Archbishop of Baltimore*. He was followed a few years later by Thomas O'Gorman, Professor of Church History in the Catholic University, who gave to the American Church History Series a *History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (1895), and by Thomas J. Campbell's paper on "The Beginnings of the Hierarchy in the United States," contributed to *The Historical Records and Studies of the United States Catholic Historical Society*, Volume I (1899). The last author to speak with authority on the subject was Dr. Peter Guilday,

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also of the Catholic University, who, in 1922, published his *Life and Times of John Carroll (1735-1815)*.

In comparing accounts of the event given by these six historians, one is struck by the great difference between the earlier and later authors. While Bernard U. Campbell and Henry de Courcy express their satisfaction over the happy manner in which American Catholics gained their religious independence, Shea, O'Gorman, Thomas Campbell and Guilday are regretful of the obstacles that had to be overcome before the Catholic Church in America could enjoy real autonomy.

"It is strange," writes Gilmary Shea,¹ "that so much effort was required, and so many difficulties prevented the Catholic body in the United States, with their ancient churches and regular succession of priests, from obtaining a concession [the appointment, immediately after the successful ending of the War of Independence, of an ecclesiastical Superior, Prefect, Vicar Apostolic or Bishop] which had, through the influence of Spain, been granted to Dr. Camps for his little flock in Florida, to the superior of the Franciscans in New Mexico, and, about this very time, to the superiors of the same order in Texas and California."

And, looking for the sources of these difficulties, the author traces them to an attempt made by France at this juncture, to capitalize for her political prestige the friendship of the United States; he even goes so far as bitterly to denounce the French "scheme for the enslavement of American Catholics." Thomas O'Gorman, Thomas Campbell and Dr. Guilday echo Shea's plaint; the first exposing what he considers to be an attempt made at "de-Americanizing the Church in the United States at its very birth by making it a dependency of the Church of France" (p. 261), the second denouncing "the machinations of Marbois to get control of everything ecclesiastical [in America] for political purposes" (p. 273), and the last devoting a whole chapter (XIII) of his work to

¹ *Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll*, p. 223.

the "French Ecclesiastical Interference in the American Church."

Two men in particular are held responsible for this "meddling" in the internal affairs of the United States: Barbé-Marbois, who in June 1784, upon the retirement of the Chevalier de la Luzerne as French Minister to the United States, was promoted from the office of Consul General to that of Chargé d'Affaires, and de Talleyrand-Périgord, Bishop of Autun, who held the post of Minister of Ecclesiastical Benefices in the Comte de Vergennes' cabinet. The former is charged by Gilmary Shea, O'Gorman, and Thomas Campbell with having conceived the scheme of subjecting American Catholics, not to a superior chosen from among them, but to one nominated by the French Court and residing in France; the latter is suspected by Dr. Guilday of having elaborated a plan through which France would find in her control over the Church in the United States a partial recompense for the sacrifices she had made for the triumph of the cause of American independence.

But it is not only Church historians who resent this alleged act of French interference in the affairs of American Catholics; other historians have seized upon the seeming abuse of America's natural gratitude towards its first and only ally to belittle the motives of French intervention in the War of Independence, and to denounce the so-called French policy of intrigue and selfish nationalism. Typical of this attitude are the remarks with which Carl Russell Fish prefaces his collection of "Documents relative to the Adjustment of the Roman Catholic Organization in the United States to the Conditions of National Independence, 1783-1789":²

The correspondence furnishes another illustration of the divergence of French and American interests which was apparent in the peace negotiations. The French government was undoubtedly

² *American Historical Review*, Vol. XV (October 1909 to July 1910), p. 801.

influenced in making its liberal offers of educational assistance by the desire to strengthen in America the party which favored the French alliance, and it was only the protest of the American Catholics which prevented their being brought into closer dependence upon France.

Naturally there was no dearth of students more familiar with the real character of the French policy towards the United States in the years of the Revolution, who resented the unjust severity of this presentation of the rôle of France; but the story of French meddling in the affairs of American Catholics went practically unchallenged for half a century, and it seemed reasonable to yield to the authority of a thesis presented with all the apparatus of the most exacting historical criticism. It was therefore almost reluctantly and fearing to undertake a futile task, that I allowed myself to be persuaded by a friend whose faith in the integrity of France had not faltered, to attempt a reexamination of the evidences of the case. I was also prompted by a sense of duty, not only to truth but to international understanding, for this supposed instance of French interference has been accepted without discussion by many history teachers.

I began the work of assembling all available documents, of arranging them chronologically, and endeavored in their light to reconstruct the whole negotiation on which has been based the charge of French intrigue and interference; and as I read, with the one desire of discovering the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, conviction grew to certainty that this accusation was altogether unfounded, and that the "scheme" indignantly denounced by Gilmary Shea was purely imaginary. Far from attempting to use religion as a means to secure her influence in the United States, France in 1783-4 showed only a generous and disinterested cooperation with the Holy See and the American representative in trying to provide for the needs of the Church in the land she had been the first to befriend and recognize as an independent nation.

The account of this episode in Franco-American relations is based solely on contemporary evidence and supported by documents at the end of each chapter; indeed many pages of the narrative are merely transcriptions of these documents which speak for themselves and contain first-hand information regarding the negotiations by the men who conducted them.

Most of the documents have already appeared in print. Bernard U. Campbell, John Gilmary Shea, and Dr. Peter Guilday have given many of them *in extenso*, others are found in Bancroft's *History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States of America* (New York, 1882), and in various publications. Of first importance is the collection of "Propaganda Documents" published in their original languages, in the *American Historical Review*, July 1910, by Carl Russell Fish, and in translation by E. P. Devitt, S. J., in the *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, December 1910. The principal contributions to the dossier of the affair contained in this present volume are a note endorsed January 4, 1784, from the Bishop of Autun, and an important postscript to la Luzerne's letter of January 31, 1784. Published translations of Latin, French and Italian documents have been used, with only minor corrections made in collating them with the originals.

I wish to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Miss Elizabeth S. Kite, who first called my attention to the use John Gilmary Shea made of Barbé-Marbois' letters, which has given a semblance of truth to the popular legend of French interference; to Dr. Gilbert Chinard, to whom I owe the letter of the Bishop of Autun and the postscript of la Luzerne's letter; and to Dr. James Brown Scott, without whom the Institut Français de Washington would not have come into being and carried on its publication of Franco-American Historical Documents.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUNDS OF THE NEGOTIATION

It may be assumed that the reader is familiar with the political and religious situation in America at the time the negotiation leading ultimately to the establishment of the American Hierarchy was undertaken; but a clearer idea of the true character of this negotiation and a fairer estimate of the French part in it may perhaps be formed by giving a brief sketch of its historical background. As three parties either took a hand in it, or were interested in its outcome, an attempt will be made—always in the light of contemporary documents—to outline the rôle of the Holy See, of the American Catholics themselves, and of the French Government, in the solution of the problem of supplying an organization for the new national church in the United States.

A. THE PROBLEM CONFRONTING THE HOLY SEE

Attention has already been called to Gilmary Shea's surprise at the slowness with which the Holy See proceeded to give a hierarchy to the Catholics of the United States, whereas the Catholics of the colonies returning to Spain were promptly provided with ecclesiastical superiors. This surprise must be ascribed to the author's failure to recall the great difference between conditions existing in the thirteen States, and those obtaining in the southern provinces, at the end of the Revolutionary War. The Spanish colonies had suffered only a temporary separation from the mother-country; when they returned to the authority of Spain's Catholic government, they were assured of a support readily granted to them and, in view of which, the Holy See quickly proceeded to the establishment of a regular hierarchy in those provinces. The problem confronting the Holy See in

the new American republic was, however, decidedly different. The United States had won their independence from England through a long and bloody conflict which had left unhappy memories and not a little rancor in the hearts of many Americans. The religious, as well as the political allegiance of Catholics and non-Catholics had been severed, and a new order had to be established for the American church, with no friendly government ready to lend its assistance.

The situation, perfectly understood in Rome,¹ is very neatly stated in the first Roman document relative to the matter. Thus, it may be read in the Instructions sent by the Prefect of the Propaganda under date of January 15, 1783: ²

. . . The independence of the United Provinces of America having been established, and it being possible to foresee that some other country or province may pass under a new rule, it seems expedient that the Holy Father take thought and care for the exercise and for the maintenance of the Catholic religion in those states.

To this end, it is necessary that Monseigneur the Nuncio be informed that all the possessions of England on the continent, or on the islands, of America were in spiritual dependence upon the Vicar-Apostolic of London, not only in accordance with a very ancient custom, but, also, upon the authority of the decrees of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, approved by several of the Sovereign Pontiffs; to which, however, there is the exception of Canada, where, after the territory had passed under British dominion, its own Bishop was left to it, at Quebec, as under French rule, conformably with article IV. of the treaty that was signed at Paris on the 10th of February, 1763. All the missionaries of the remainder of those vast territories received their powers for the exercise of the apostolic ministry from the Vicar-Apostolic of London. The number of

¹ The Sovereign Pontiff was Pius VI, who, in 1775, had succeeded Clement XIV. Cardinal Borromeo was his Secretary of State, and Cardinal Antonelli was Prefect of the Congregation of the Propaganda. The Papal Nuncio in Paris was Prince Doria Pamphili, Archbishop of Seleucia, who held this office until the Spring of 1785, when he was elevated to the Cardinalate, and replaced in Paris by Monsignor Dugnani. Most of the information contained in this volume will be taken from the official correspondence between the Cardinal Prefect and the Nuncio.

² See Chap. II, Appendix No. 1, p. 45.

Catholics in those English possessions, and the extent to which the Catholic religion flourishes there, are not known with precision. . . .

. . . Now, as the approaching declaration of the independence of all these provinces will destroy the bonds of their political and civil subordination to the British government, it will thereby destroy all bonds in religious matters, and therefore, the Vicar-Apostolic of London will be deprived of the influence and direction that he has exercised, until now, in the religious affairs of those provinces.

The Holy See had to consider not only the new American nationalism, but also the religious bigotry which was widespread throughout the liberated colonies, and affected Anglican as well as Catholic organizations. Any attempt at establishing a hierarchy might be expected to arouse the latent opposition of many Protestants to the very idea of an episcopate. This must have been realized by the Roman authorities, who surely were not unaware of the failure of the mission entrusted ten years previously (1772) to the Bishop of Quebec, to administer the sacrament of Confirmation in the English colonies outside his own diocese. In a letter of April 22, 1773, addressed to that Prelate, Father Farmer, one of the Jesuit missionaries of Philadelphia, said: ³

It is incredible how hateful to non-Catholics in all parts of America is the very name of Bishop, even to such as should be members of the Church which is called Anglican. Whence many considered it a most unworthy measure that a Bishop be granted to the Canadians; and, as for several years past the question is being agitated in England of establishing in these Provinces a Protestant Bishop of the Anglican Communion, so many obstacles were found, due especially to the character of the Americans (of whom most of the early colonists were dissidents from the Anglicans, not to mention such as left our own faith) that nothing has as yet been effected. Hardly I can persuade myself that the Right Reverend (Bishop) might succeed in obtaining from the Governor of Canada or from the King, the faculty of exercising his power beyond the limits of the Provinces belonging formerly to the Canadian government, and lately ceded by treaty to the English.

³ See Guilday, *Life and Times of John Carroll*, pp. 160-61.

An appreciation of this condition enables one to understand why the first step taken by the Prefect of Propaganda towards the establishment of the American hierarchy should be a proposition directed to Congress, whose agreement thereto was deemed requisite. And, assuming the consent of Congress, the Holy See had to survey the resources, in men and in money, upon which it could count to restore normal Catholic activities in the new Republic. Rome knew that, for some time at least, owing to the severance of the political and religious bonds between the United States and England, no English clergyman would be welcome in America—especially should he come vested with official jurisdiction. Moreover, ten years had elapsed since the suppression of the Society of Jesus, to which belonged the missionaries of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and even if there was no accurate information as to the number of those missionaries, Rome must have rightly guessed that they were few, impoverished by the war, and lacking educational facilities for training young men to fill the gaps that death had created in their ranks. It was therefore not unnatural that the Holy See should think of France, with her long tradition of faith and missionary work, France who had won the friendship of the new Republic by espousing the cause of its independence. So the Cardinal Prefect sought the good offices of the French Court, confidently expecting the patronage of His Most Christian Majesty "for concerting a plan of missions and missionaries for the service of Catholics in the Republic," and, for the support of these missionaries looking not only to the charity of the faithful, but to the "liberal munificence" of the king. Such, six months before the actual opening of negotiations, was the Roman conception of the problem, and of its solution.

B. THE PROBLEM CONFRONTING AMERICAN CATHOLICS

How did the American Catholics view this problem which caused such concern to the Holy See? ⁴ Dr. Guilday ⁵ gives a detailed account of the attempts made several years prior, both in Rome by the Propaganda, and in London by Bishop Challoner, the Vicar-Apostolic, to establish a regular hierarchy in the American colonies, and of the steadfast opposition to this project by the American Catholics. The reasons upon which both clergy and laity based their opposition cannot be discussed here, but one fact is unmistakably clear: at this time, no bishop or vicar apostolic was wanted by American Catholics. "We therefore," concludes the remonstrance sent July 16, 1765, by the American laity to the English Jesuit Provincial, "by all that is sacred, intreat you, H[onored] Sir, as head of the Gen[tileme]n we have for our teachers, that you will be pleased to use all y(ou)r interest to avert so fatal a measure, & as far as you judge necessary or proper for that purpose, to transmit copys hereof to all it may concern." On the same day, Charles Carroll, who was one of the signers of the remonstrance, wrote a personal letter to Bishop Challoner, in which he urged the same arguments against the appointment of an American bishop or vicar apostolic:

⁴ From John Carroll's Report to the Propaganda, March 1, 1785, it is learned that the Catholic population of the colonies was some 24,500, to which should be added about 14,500 whom Barbé-Marbois counted in the region from the Illinois to the southern States. There were twenty-four ex-Jesuits, with Father Lewis as their superior, ministering to the first group. Of these, John Carroll was one of the youngest, and it is from his correspondence with his confreres, Charles Plowden of London, and Father Thorpe of Rome, that most of the information used in this study regarding the attitude and activities of the American clergy has been drawn.

⁵ "Opposition to the American Bishopric, 1765-1784," *Life and Times of John Carroll*, Chapter XI.

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Should an Apost[olic] Vicar, or Priest of any other Denomination be sent amongst us, I am fearful ye peace & harmony w[hi]ch has so long subsisted, will be very soon banished. I have many reasons to alledge ag[ain]st such a step, too tedious to trouble you with, and of w[hi]ch many must be obvious to y[ou]r L[or]dship. Y[ou]r L[or]dship must know, y[a]t [that] for many years past attempts have been made to establish a Protestant Bishop on this continent, and y[a]t such attempts have been as constantly oppos'd thro the fixed aversion ye people of America in general have to a person of this character. If such is the aversion of Protestants to a Protestant Bishop, with w[ha]t an eye will they look upon an Apost[olic] Vicar? I am confident no one here has ever thought such a person necessary.⁶

Mention has already been made of the protest raised by Father Farmer, of Philadelphia, against the proposed visit of the Bishop of Quebec to the English colonies in 1773, for the purpose of administering the sacrament of Confirmation. The conviction that the Puritan spirit then dominant in the colonies was hostile to all hierarchy, seems to have been generally held, not only among American Catholics, but even among the Anglicans. It must have been deeply impressed upon Barbé-Marbois, French Chargé d'Affaires, as a result of his close association with Charles Carroll and other members of the Church, and inspired the cautious action he was to counsel in 1785.

Turning from the American Catholic laity to the clergy, the same attitude of opposition to an American bishopric is apparent; but to the general reasons weighing on the minds of the laymen, the clergy could add special reasons plain to the reader if he recalls the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, and the character of some of the Roman Congregations at the end of the eighteenth century. Under pressure of the European Catholic Powers led by Pombal, the Prime Minister of Portugal, Pope Clement XIV had sacrificed the Jesuits and suppressed their Society. The psychological effect

⁶ Guilday, pp. 155-56.

of that terrible blow upon all members of the Company, and particularly upon the missionaries whose labors in far lands were so absolutely free from all suspicion of political intrigue, may be easily imagined. The Society, from its foundation, had always been at the vanguard for the defence and propagation of the Catholic faith, and the Jesuits could not but feel aggrieved at the weakness shown by the Holy See in their behalf; it was therefore not unnatural that they should, henceforth, be suspicious of any project regarding them which emanated from the Congregation of the Propaganda. So utterly unacceptable was the idea of the irreparable extinction of their Society that many ex-Jesuits throughout the world still entertained the hope of seeing its restoration after the passing of the devastating storm; and that hope was particularly strong in the hearts of the American Jesuits, who looked upon their rich Maryland plantations as a means left in their hands by Providence for the reorganization of their missionary and educational activities in more auspicious days—hence their fear of losing control over their estates, their almost instinctive distrust of the Propaganda, and the precautions they felt in duty bound to take against any possible encroachment upon their rightful possessions.

Among the resolutions passed by the delegates of the clergy at Whitemarsh in October 1784, one was to the effect that "a bishop is at present unnecessary," and another, that "if one be sent, it is decided by the majority of the chapter that he shall not be entitled to any support from the present estates of the clergy."⁷ And in a letter dated September 26, 1783, to Charles Plowden, John Carroll wrote:⁸

Your information of the intention of Propaganda gives me concern no farther, than to hear that men, whose institution was for the service of religion, should bend their thoughts so much more to the grasping of power and the commanding of wealth.

⁷ Campbell, *United States Catholic Magazine*, Vol. III (1844), p. 373.

⁸ Guilday, p. 167, note.

One may well ask how this attitude agrees with the profession of the Catholic loyalty; for the Pope is the center of Catholic unity, and no one vested with pontifical authority could arouse such suspicions on the part of men loyal in the practice of their religion. The answer to this puzzling question may be found in the same letter of John Carroll, where he expresses himself ready to recognize the spiritual authority of the Pope, but no less disposed to resist any encroachment of the Congregation of the Propaganda. In words which betray a deep feeling, he declares he will go as far as appealing to the civil power to prevent or correct any attempt of that Congregation to exercise control over the temporal possessions of the American clergy; and the reason for his attitude is clearly stated. Like his fellow-Catholics, he was keenly conscious of his non-Catholic compatriots' "republican jealousy" of foreign meddling in American affairs, and he was unwilling to risk arousing their prejudices against the small body of American Catholics.

One may wonder at the distinction which that loyal but prudent churchman made between the Pope, and the Congregation through which the Pope exercised his authority; but this wonder will vanish when it is recalled that at the end of the eighteenth century the Pope was not only the head of the Church, but also a temporal monarch. As head of the Church, he commanded and received unswerving loyalty from all the faithful, but as a temporal power he ruled a State whose interests might conflict with those of other States. Some of the Roman Congregations (which are so many departments of the Church administration) were occupied with purely spiritual problems, and others with purely temporal affairs; and there was yet a third group whose jurisdiction, whether purely spiritual or involving some element of temporal power, viewed from so great a distance it was difficult to determine. Such seems to have been the view taken of the Propaganda by the Catholics of the American colonies during

the years immediately preceding and following the Revolution, and every expression of protest against alien jurisdiction and "foreign meddling" to be found in the correspondence of John Carroll and his English friends may be regarded as directed against the Roman Congregation of Propaganda.

C. THE FRENCH PROBLEM AND THE FRENCH ATTITUDE

The problem of the reorganization of the Church in the United States was one affecting solely the Holy See and the American Catholics. Congress had adopted a policy of non-interference with religious bodies, and it was on his own initiative and responsibility that Franklin dealt for a few months with a problem which, as United States Minister to the French Court, was not of his province. He acted, however, in response to advances made to him by the representative of the Holy See; and it was also the representative of the Holy See who brought the French government and members of the French hierarchy into a negotiation to which they might have reasonably expected never to have become parties. It is therefore fitting that an attempt should be made to understand the spirit in which the French officials participated in that negotiation.

The foreign affairs of France were at that time conducted by the Comte de Vergennes, who has come down in history as one of the ablest of French ministers, and as negotiator of the Treaty of Alliance with the United States. He was a man of high integrity, and the Nuncio's correspondence contains frequent expressions of admiration for his character, and appreciation of the cooperation he lent to the plans of the Holy See regarding the American Church. In this matter he was assisted by the Duc de Talleyrand-Périgord, Bishop of Autun and Minister of Ecclesiastical Benefices, who, in 1782, had been elected General Agent for the Assembly of the

French clergy. The French minister to the United States was the Chevalier de la Luzerne, praised by the Nuncio for his uprightness and absolute loyalty to the interests of the Church. He held his post from 1779 until June 1784, when he was replaced by the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois. That French intervention in the War of Independence had been partly motivated by considerations of national interest, need not be questioned; the loss of the colonies to England was undoubtedly advantageous to France, Great Britain's great rival as a world power. Nevertheless, the friendship shown towards Americans, not only by French volunteers, but by the French government, was genuine and truly merited the numerous tributes of gratitude penned by Benjamin Franklin. In writing, for instance, July 22, 1783,⁹ to Robert Livingston, then Secretary of State, Franklin laments the lack of confidence shown towards France by some of the American delegates to the peace conference, and doubts the continuance of Franco-American amity, while he appreciates in these terms the disinterestedness of the Comte de Vergennes' policy:

The judgment you make of the conduct of France in the peace, and the greater glory acquired by her moderation than even by her arms, appears to me perfectly just. The character of the court and nation seems, of late years, to be considerably changed. The ideas of aggrandizement by conquest are out of fashion, and those of commerce are more enlightened and more generous than before. . . . The wise here think France great enough; and its ambition at present seems to be only that of justice and magnanimity towards other nations, fidelity and utility to its allies.

And a year later, May 12, 1784,¹⁰ he pleads with Samuel Mather for the preservation of that friendship:

This powerful monarchy continues its friendship to the United States. It is a friendship of the utmost importance to our security and should be carefully cultivated.

⁹ Sparks, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. IX, p. 536.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 84.

One may, then, understand the legitimate pride expressed by the Chevalier de la Luzerne, when, having returned to France, he reviewed his work and his impressions in a letter, November 6, 1784, to Vergennes: ¹¹

The just, generous, and, I may say, novel conduct which his Majesty has pursued has smoothed all the difficulties which I had foreseen. It has been easy for me to cause his character to be respected, and himself personally to be cherished, since his benefactions and services exceeded the expectations and the demands of his allies. The independence of the United States is the work of the king; this is an established truth which the Americans do not seek to dissimulate and it is, perhaps, the most memorable event which can honor the history of a nation or a reign.

The Comte de Vergennes would, indeed, have been very happy to see the friendship which had been cemented by blood shed on the same battlefields, subsist between the two nations, but he had no illusion as to the permanence of the American sentiment, and although he continued to aid the United States financially, even after the signing of the preliminaries of peace and at great inconvenience to the realm, he soon realized what Franklin had felt bound to report to the American Secretary of State, namely, that forces were at work to destroy that sympathetic understanding. Early in the year 1783 (on February 6th), the French minister, la Luzerne, had written to Paris for instructions as to the future conduct of France towards the United States: ¹²

In this state of things the question is asked, What ought to be the conduct of France? England will, no doubt, endeavor to deprive France of its new ally or make it useless. To the well-known causes of a reconciliation between that power and its ancient colonies there may be opposed perhaps jealousy, resulting from neighborhood, and even the interest of the United States; but these last considerations will have weight only in congress. It is in that body that the attachment to France will be preserved, while the inclination of habits, language, and customs will incline the people to England.

¹¹ Bancroft, *History of the Constitution of the United States*, Vol. I, p. 391.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 293.

La Luzerne's query anticipated a similar question in the mind of the Comte de Vergennes, who, only a few days later (February 27th), wrote to the French minister in the United States: ¹³

Peace establishes a new order of things in America. The Americans, acknowledged henceforth by all the powers of Europe, will without doubt employ themselves in fixing the principles to serve as the basis of political and commercial relations which they will seek to establish everywhere, and principally with their former mother country. You will feel yourself, sir, that it is important for the king to be informed on this subject with the greatest promptitude, because his future conduct ought to be traced on the system that the United States will develop; although we do not count in any degree on the gratitude of the Americans, we nevertheless look upon our alliance with them as unalterable.

The most explicit statement of the French attitude of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the United States, adopted on the eve of the negotiations to be initiated by the Papal Nuncio with Franklin, is found in a letter of the Comte de Vergennes to la Luzerne, July 21, 1783.¹⁴ It was probably written in answer to the latter's request of February 6th for directions, and reveals the deep feeling of the Prime Minister towards the American allies. If a tone of disappointment can be detected in that document, it nevertheless furnishes unmistakable evidence of the statesman's resolution not to attempt to influence the domestic arrangements—religious as well as political—of the United States. The minister expressed regret at Franklin's application to Congress for his recall, and his hope that Congress might reject the petition, "for it would be impossible to give Mr. Franklin a successor so wise and so conciliating as himself." He then said:

The representations that you have made to Mr. Morris, to prevent him from demanding of us new funds, have been fruitless. This superintendent of finance, abusing the facilities he has found on

¹³ Bancroft, p. 297.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 324-25.

our part up to the present time, has so multiplied his drafts that they exceed by nearly two millions the six that the king has granted for the present year. It would have certainly been very agreeable to the king to assist by new succors the finances of the United States; but his majesty could not increase the burdens which weigh on his people for a nation which rejects, with unexampled obstinacy, every expedient thus far proposed to put an end to its distress. We have never founded our policy with regard to the United States on their gratitude; this sentiment is infinitely rare among sovereigns, and republics do not know it. Thus, sir, all that we have to do with regard to Americans is to let matters take their natural course, and for ourselves not to depart from the noble, frank, and disinterested march we have kept up to the present time with regard to the Americans. And if we cannot direct them according to the great principles which serve for the basis of our alliance with them, to take in season the necessary measures not to be the dupes of their ingratitude and of their mistaken policy. . . . We are without the means of influencing the domestic arrangements of the United States; and, under all circumstances, we can but be tranquil spectators of the commotions that their constitution and their internal relations can meet with.

These texts give an insight into the character of the relations existing between the French and the American governments at the opening of the negotiations for the establishment of a Catholic hierarchy in the United States. The rôle of France will be better appreciated if it is borne in mind that America had clearly manifested her intention to be mistress in her own house, and that the French authorities had a perfect understanding of that attitude. They would lend their friendly offices, if requested to do so; but they wisely realized that they were "without the means of influencing the domestic arrangements of the United States," and they adhered faithfully to the line of conduct given by the Prime Minister to his representative in the new republic, namely, "to let matters take their natural course, and for ourselves not to depart from the noble, frank, and disinterested march we have kept up to the present time with regard to the Americans."

CHAPTER TWO

ROMAN INITIATIVE, 1783

The peace preliminaries between the United States and England were signed at Paris, November 30, 1783. The Holy See, which had been watching the outcome of the conflict between the colonies and the mother country, seized the opportunity now offered to secure the interests of the Catholic Church in the new nation; indeed as early as January 15, 1783, Cardinal Antonelli, Prefect of the Propaganda, directed most precise instructions to Prince Doria Pamphili, the Papal Nuncio in Paris. An examination of this document,¹ initiating the course of negotiations towards the organization of the Catholic Church in the United States, reveals the spirit in which the Holy See was to act in the whole affair, and the way in which France was brought into it.

The Prefect informed the Nuncio that the Holy See did not consider the peace about to be concluded of sufficient importance to justify sending a legate to the peace congress. "Nevertheless," he wrote, "the independence of the United Provinces of America having been established, and it being possible to foresee that some other country or province may pass under a new rule, it seems expedient that the Holy Father take thought and care for the exercise and for the maintenance of the Catholic religion in those states." The Prefect then recalled the ecclesiastical status of the colonies, heretofore under the jurisdiction of the Vicar-Apostolic of London. He was unable, however, to describe the religious situation in the States, inasmuch as "the report of 1756, . . . is the last on this subject that the Vicar-Apostolic of London sent to the Congregation of Propaganda," but he foresaw that "as the approaching declaration of the inde-

¹ Appendix No. 1, p. 45.

pendence of all the provinces will destroy the bonds of their political and civil subordination to the British government, it will thereby destroy all bonds in religious matters."

In the present circumstances, the Prefect mentioned the Holy See's having experienced "the efficacy of the protection that the King of France has given to religion when similar treaties of peace were to be concluded," and he instructed the Nuncio as follows:

1) He should "effectively engage the zeal and piety of His Most Christian Majesty, to the end that, through the influence which he has with the leaders of the American Congress, he may be pleased to procure an article concerning the free exercise and the maintenance of the Catholic Religion, in the solemn convention of peace, which is to be guaranteed by the public faith."

2) "The task then should be to seek the patronage of His Most Christian Majesty for concerting a plan of missions and missionaries for the service of Catholics living in that republic."

3) "The most obvious and the most desirable plan would be to establish in one of the principal cities a Vicar-Apostolic, with episcopal character, chosen from among the subjects of the new republic, . . . if the leaders of the American Congress should be loath to admit a bishop into their country, there might be substituted, instead, a general prefect of those missions, . . . if natives should be found available, they should always be preferred . . . but, if available natives should not be found, there should be permission to appoint foreigners, always, however, from among the most impartial and acceptable to the government."

4) "There should be, also, an agreement concerning means for the temporal subsistence of these evangelical missionaries," but as "it is doubtful . . . that the government will concur to that end . . . the Congregation of the Propa-

ganda will be ready to assign an allowance to the bishop or to the prefect vicar-apostolic, hoping that the other missionaries will receive their support from the charity of the faithful, and especially that if they be Frenchmen and for the service of subjects of His Most Christian Majesty, they will receive it from his royal and liberal munificence."

These instructions are too clear to require comment. They reveal that the initiative in the negotiations was taken by the Holy See and that, from the beginning, the French government was counted upon to lend its good offices and give its material support to the undertaking; and this condition will obtain throughout the entire affair, whether the appeal for French coöperation and assistance comes from the Holy See, from Franklin, or, at a later date, from the American Jesuits themselves.

On February 4, 1783,² the Nuncio "informed the Count of Vergennes of the solicitation that was transmitted" to him by the Cardinal Prefect. Regarding the first point of the instructions, the royal minister had already taken pains "to secure peace in religious matters for those subjects who return to British rule," that is, for Canada; but regarding the United States, "which, in future, are to be recognized as a new sovereign republic," the minister declined to intervene between the American Government and their Catholic subjects. They had not been under French rule, and the French statesman, always a stickler for diplomatic proprieties, felt that he would not be justified in attempting to bring pressure on a French ally in a matter of purely internal policy. However, the Nuncio was able to report that "the count promises himself that, as all religions, and their public practice, are tolerated in that country, upon principle, there will be consent, not only to the presence of Catholic missionaries, but, also, to the appointment of one of the citizens of that country

² Appendix No. 2, p. 48.

as Vicar-Apostolic with episcopal character." The Nuncio had ended his interview by begging the Comte de Vergennes "to inform Mr. Franklin . . . that I would have spoken to him of this matter, as I will do, when I shall have heard from the Count of Vergennes what Mr. Franklin may have had to say on the subject." When or whether, the projected interview between the Nuncio and Franklin took place cannot, in the absence of any reference to it in available documents, be ascertained; but even at this early stage of the proceedings the French minister had no doubt that Congress would approve the appointment of a native American as Vicar-Apostolic with episcopal character.

The next document for consideration is a letter dated March 19, 1783,⁸ wherein the Cardinal Prefect expresses his gratification at the steps taken by Vergennes to secure in the treaty of peace with England, "the tranquility of our holy Catholic religion," and at the hope expressed by the Prime Minister, "not only that Catholic missionaries will be tolerated in the United States of America, but that a native Vicar-Apostolic, with episcopal character, may be elected for that country."

The mission entrusted to the Nuncio was indeed delicate; one need not be surprised if the papal representative waited until the end of July to deliver a formal note to the American minister. The ground had to be prepared and, possibly, objections had to be removed from Franklin's mind before the Nuncio felt it prudent to approach him on a matter which seemed to lay outside the scope of the diplomat's mission. For that period no document has been found to permit a reconstruction of the Nuncio's activities, or the steps taken by the French minister to help him attain his object.

Meanwhile the need of attempting, on their own initiative,

⁸ Appendix No. 3, p. 49.

a reorganization of their spiritual and temporal administration was felt by the clergy of Maryland and Pennsylvania. Bernard U. Campbell records that,

A letter from several of the clergy having been addressed to Rev. Mr. Lewis, vicar of the bishop of London for Maryland and Pennsylvania, etc., and superior at the time of the dissolution of the Society of Jesus, praying that he would attend a meeting which they conceived to be absolutely necessary for the preservation and well government of all matters and concerns of the clergy, and the service of religion in those countries, Mr. Lewis expressed his entire approbation of the design, and notice was accordingly given to the clergy generally of the time and place of meeting, and their attendance requested.⁴

Nine delegates met at Whitemarsh, Maryland, on June 27, 1783. Their object "was agreed to be, to establish a form of government for the clergy, and lay down rules for the administration of their property." The first draft of the "form of government" was made at that meeting; it was to be revised at a subsequent meeting to be held the following November, and it was finally adopted a year later, October 1784. It is important to bear these dates in mind, in order to form a correct idea of the mutual relations between the two plans for reorganization of the American missions—one of which may be called the Roman plan, since it was conceived in Rome and carried out in Paris by the Roman Nuncio, while the plan of the ex-Jesuits may be called the American plan—for the dates show whether the plans were antagonistic or merely parallel, and whether their respective authors were sufficiently informed of the existence and, especially, the character of the other plan to be tempted to thwart it.

The Roman plan was conceived at least six months before the other began to take form, and at a time when Roman authorities complained that they had long been without direct or indirect information of what was going on in the Ameri-

⁴ *Op. cit.*, VI, pp. 370-71.

can missions. The American plan was under consideration when the news first reached America that the Roman authorities had formulated their views and sent their instructions to the Paris Nuncio; but, as will be shown, even the announcement of John Carroll's selection as Prefect of the American missions, did not alter the views of the clergy on the opportuneness of establishing an American episcopate.

On July 28, 1783, the Nuncio addressed to Franklin a formal note⁵ which embodied the proposals contained in the Prefect's instructions of January 15th. Realizing that the dependence of American Catholics on the Vicar-Apostolic resident in London "can not be continued," and urging it to be "essential that the Catholic subjects of the United States have an ecclesiastic to govern them in what concerns their religion," the Congregation of the Propaganda "has determined to propose to congress the installation of one of their Catholic subjects, in some city of the United States of North America, with the powers of vicar-apostolic, and with the character of bishop or simply as prefect apostolic." Preference is expressed for a Bishop Vicar Apostolic, "and as it might happen, at times, that no one be found among the subjects of the United States qualified to be entrusted with the spiritual government, whether as bishop or prefect apostolic, it would be necessary in such cases that congress be pleased to consent that the choice be made among the subjects of a foreign nation, the most friendly to the United States."

Two points of this note must be stressed. The first is the Propaganda's determination to propose to Congress the appointment of "one of their Catholic subjects" as head of American Catholics; the second is the anticipation of the need of having recourse to the assistance of a foreign nation, in case that "no one be found among the subjects of the United States qualified to be entrusted with the spiritual

⁵ Appendix No. 4, p. 49.

government." Here we see exemplified the policy of the Holy See, both in its regard for national amour-propre, and in its concern for the needs of the Church.

After reading the Nuncio's communication and "reflecting upon it maturely," Franklin despatched his "Observations on the Note of M. the Apostolic Nuncio,"⁶ and a little later, a "Note on American Catholics."⁷

From the "Observations" we learn Franklin's first reaction to the proposal he had received from the Nuncio. He believed that "it would be absolutely useless to send it [the note] to the congress"; but he gave as his personal opinion "that the Court of Rome may take, of its own initiative, all the measures that may be useful to the Catholics of America." He went even further than the Nuncio. The latter had merely expressed the hope that if no native American priest were qualified for the office of Vicar-Apostolic Congress would approve the appointment of an alien from a friendly nation. Franklin makes bold to express his belief "that Congress will not fail to give its tacit approval to the choice that the Court of Rome, in concert with the minister of the United States, may make of a French ecclesiastic, who, residing in France, may regulate the spiritual affairs of the Catholics . . . in those States, through a suffragan residing in America." Franklin does not state what he considers the "many political reasons that may make that arrangement desirable," nor does he intimate how he himself came to amplify the plan which had been submitted to him in the name of the Propaganda. The fact is that it is under his pen we find the first and only recommendation of appointing a French bishop to regulate from Paris the affairs of American Catholics.

Franklin's proposal has for a long time puzzled historians of the Catholic Church in the United States, and some have attempted to trace to French influence its formation in his

⁶ Appendix No. 5, p. 50.

⁷ Appendix No. 6, p. 51.

mind; but, in the absence of any actual reference to, or even hint of such influence in the correspondence of the Nuncio, of Franklin himself, or of any of the French officials taking part in the negotiation, this is a pure conjecture. Even such a conjecture is belied by the set policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the United States outlined, on the one hand, by Vergennes' instructions to la Luzerne, and on the other by the Nuncio's rejection of that part of Franklin's answer. One may even wonder whether it was brought to the Comte de Vergennes' attention before the month of December, when Franklin urged it on the Prime Minister, and the latter turned it over to the Bishop of Autun for examination. As to the Nuncio, his unfavorable reaction is evidenced in the report he sent, September 1st, to the Cardinal Prefect: ⁸

"In this connection," he wrote, "I am of the opinion that, rather than a French ecclesiastic, the apostolic nuncio for the time being in France, in concert with that Sacred Congregation, might, himself, invest an ecclesiastic with the character of bishop, of prefect, or of vicar-apostolic for the government in question [of American Catholics]."

In other words, he thought at once of reserving the rights and prerogatives of the Holy See.

Franklin was evidently quite taken by the business, new to him, of helping to solve the problem of the reorganization of the Church in America for, in spite of the pressure of work which must have fallen upon him on the eve of the signing of the peace treaty (which was to take place September 3rd), he found time to devise further plans for the maintenance of the American clergy, and for the education of American seminarians. To this end he addressed a second Note to the Apostolic Nuncio.⁹ He begins with a statement of what he conceives to be the policy of Congress in matters of religion: "The unity of the present government seems to

⁸ Appendix No. 7, p. 52.

⁹ Appendix No. 6, p. 51.

require that those bonds [between the Catholics of America and Great Britain] be diminished and weakened by taking from the British ministry all influence over the subjects of the United States." He then proceeds to the practical problem facing American Catholics: the lack of an endowment for the clergy and the impossibility of making their support a public charge, and the lack of a Catholic institution in the United States for training ecclesiastics. A solution occurred to the American minister: Why should not the King of France take over the four establishments of English monks in France, and apply their revenues to the training and support of ecclesiastics who would be sent to America? And "better to secure this object," Franklin renews his suggestion of appointing a French bishop, who would be one of those named by the Holy See, and who, residing in France, would always be in a position to act in concert with the Nuncio of His Holiness and the American minister, and to adopt, with them, those means for training the ecclesiastics most "agreeable to Congress and useful to American Catholics." A slight difference is to be remarked between the suggestion embodied in this note and that contained in the preceding one. While in his "Observations" Franklin conceived it to be the task of the French ecclesiastic "to regulate the spiritual affairs of the Catholics" of America, he here limits that task to seeing, in accordance with the Papal Nuncio and the American minister, to "the means of training the [American] ecclesiastics." The fluidity of Franklin's views are a proof that they represented his quick and spontaneous reactions, and so preoccupied was he with the practical financial side of the affair, that he failed to see the incongruity of a plan which would bring American Catholics under the jurisdiction of a French bishop and, apparently, he saw no injustice in the confiscation, at the end of a Franco-British war, of property belonging to British subjects resident in France.

The Nuncio's report to the Cardinal Prefect gives his opinion of Franklin's plan.¹⁰ He emphatically rejected the suggestion of confiscating the four English Benedictine establishments. It "could not, and should not, be proposed, much less accepted." On the contrary, the Nuncio thought that the plan of appointing a French bishop with the limited charge of looking after the means of training the ecclesiastics, "deserves all attention, tending, as it does, to the attainment of desirable ends." The same report adds that, "in order to take time to send a categorical reply to Mr. Franklin," the Nuncio merely acknowledged the receipt of his two notes and, moreover, "thought it well to give information of the contents of these papers to the Count of Vergennes, a true statesman, full of zeal and attachment for our holy Catholic religion." Whether or not the project of appointing a French bishop was mentioned by the Nuncio, and the impression it may have made at that time on the mind of the French minister is not known, as the report is silent on this point; but when the Nuncio "begged of him to facilitate the means of establishing a college in France for the education of as many priests as might be necessary," the royal minister assured him that he would "give all the assistance that it may be in his power to lend in that connection." And passing without delay to the manner of carrying out his promise of help, Vergennes directed the Nuncio to speak to "Monseigneur the bishop of Autun . . . in order that he, by his lights, and by his good offices, may assist in the establishment of the proposed college." He even suggested some city near the seashore as the most suitable place, and called the Nuncio's attention to the necessity of obtaining funds, of ascertaining the needs of the American missions, and of finding out whether America would supply candidates for the priesthood.

The interview with the Bishop of Autun, who was, as we

¹⁰ Appendix No. 7, p. 52.

know, Minister of Ecclesiastical Benefices, took place on August 27, 1783, and the two prelates agreed to confer again, together with the Comte de Vergennes, the following Saturday, August 30th. This conference took place at Versailles, and the Nuncio found both the Prime Minister and the Bishop of Autun "most desirous of obtaining the funds necessary" for the education of American missionaries. Here, also, it is interesting and important to observe that no reference was made to Franklin's suggestion of the appointment of a French bishop. The entire attention of the Roman Nuncio and the French members of the conference was given to the problem of providing American Catholics with missionaries. To facilitate the realization of that part of the project the Nuncio begged the Cardinal to obtain from "the prelate who is in charge of that mission"—the Vicar Apostolic of London—the information requested by Vergennes and the Bishop of Autun, and he announced his intention of writing "in quest of this information" to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, "who has been minister plenipotentiary of the Most Christian King to the United States of North America for the last three years, and who is much esteemed and loved there." Realizing that discretion at this stage of the proceedings was imperative, and fearing lest the bruited of what was as yet a mere project might cause its frustration by those who would regard it with disfavor, the Nuncio ends his letter with the request that the Prefect "inform neither the ecclesiastic just mentioned [the Vicar-Apostolic of London], nor any one else, with the exception of the Holy Father," of his negotiation with Vergennes and the Bishop of Autun.

On September 3rd, two days after the Prelate sent his report to Rome, the peace treaty confirming the recognition of the United States as an independent nation was signed at Versailles. It contained no reference to freedom of religion such as the Prefect of the Propaganda had hoped for, but the confidence expressed by Vergennes and the promise

made by Franklin that the Holy See would be unhampered in any measure it might take of its own initiative for the welfare of the Catholics of America, were destined to see their fulfilment in a régime of religious liberty which has become a most cherished American tradition.

It will be recalled that Franklin, upon receiving the Nuncio's note, had decided that "it would be absolutely useless to send it to the congress," because that body, "according to its powers and its constitutions, can not, and should not, in any case, intervene in the ecclesiastical affairs of any sect or of any religion established in America." After further reflection, however, he changed his mind, and on September 13, 1783, transmitted the note to the President of Congress. "I send also," he wrote from Passy,¹¹ "a copy of a note I received from the Pope's Nuncio. He is very civil on all occasions, and has mentioned the possibility of an advantageous trade America might have with the Ecclesiastical State, which he says has two good ports." This letter, written in the Fall, explains how the news of the proceedings undertaken by the Nuncio with Franklin reached America, and how it was that as early as January 31, 1784, la Luzerne could make it the subject of one of his reports to Vergennes.

The last days of September 1783 bring us back to America, where the clergy were considering the "plan of government" outlined by their delegates, June 26th, at Whitmarsh. On September 23rd, seven members of the Southern District met at Newton, and elected the Reverend Mr. Lewis superior. Of this meeting, John Gilmary Shea writes that "it showed less jealousy of the superior in spirituals than had been manifested at the general meeting."¹² However, news of the Propaganda's plan for the reorganization of the missions, and of the Paris negotiations begun with Franklin by the Papal Nuncio, must have reached England from Rome

¹¹ John Bigelow, *The Complete Works of Franklin*, Vol. VIII, p. 356.

¹² Shea, pp. 217-218.

or from Paris and been reported to the American clergy, for on September 26th John Carroll, in answer to Charles Plowden, wrote: ¹³

As to what Father Thorpe reports, that designs are entertained of obtaining all the goods of the extinct Society in America as well as in England, your information of the intention of Propaganda gives me concern no farther than to hear that men, whose institution was for the service of Religion, should bend their thoughts so much more to the grasping of power and the commanding of wealth. For they may be assured that they will never get possession of a sixpence of our property here; and, if any of our friends could be weak enough to deliver any real estate into their hands or attempt to subject it to their authority, our civil government would be called upon to wrest it again out of their dominion. A foreign temporal jurisdiction will never be tolerated here; and even the spiritual supremacy of the Pope is the only reason why in some of the United States the full participation of all civil rights is not granted to the Roman Catholics. They may therefore send their agents when they please; they will certainly return empty-handed.

The tone of the writer's denunciation of the supposed intention of the Roman Congregation is in sharp contrast with the tone of his reference to America's French allies, which we find in the same letter: ¹⁴

You have adopted the language of some of the prints on your side of the water, by representing us under imperious leaders, and the trammels of France. . . . As to the trammels of France, we certainly never have worn her chains, but have treated with her as equals, have experienced from her the greatest magnanimity and moderation, and have repaid it with an honorable fidelity to our engagements. By both of us proceeding on these principles, the war has been brought to an issue, with which, if you are pleased, all is well, for we are certainly satisfied.

From another extract of the same letter it is seen that John Carroll was concerned with the very same need that had led

¹³ The text of this extract given by Guilday (p. 167 note) has been here completed with words quoted by Hughes (pp. 615, 627-628).

¹⁴ Quoted by Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 364.

the Papal Nuncio to confer with Vergennes and the Bishop of Autun.¹⁵ "The object nearest to my heart is to establish a college on this continent for the education of youth, which might at the same time be a seminary for future clergymen. But at present I see no prospect of success." On this matter of training missionaries, which was of prime importance for the future of the Church in America, there was a spontaneous agreement between the American Jesuit and the representative of the Holy See; and when the latter appealed to France for assistance in a task which the American Catholics felt they were not yet able to undertake themselves, he was unconsciously meeting the wishes of John Carroll and his confreres.

John Carroll's letter to Charles Plowden was hardly on its way when, on September 27th, the Prefect of the Propaganda acknowledged the Nuncio's first Report.¹⁶ The Prefect assured the Nuncio that the Holy Father commended him for his zeal and sagacity "in having interested the Count of Vergennes and Monseigneur the bishop of Autun in this salutary work." He praised the former as a "worthy prime minister," and the latter for the "subsistence" he was insuring, in view of his ministry of ecclesiastical benefices, for the new American workers. The Cardinal insisted, however, that the Congregation would abide by its original offer to assist in the support of the Vicar-Apostolic or of the Bishop "whom it will be necessary to put at the head of the Catholics in the United States." Then, summing up the results of the negotiation at that stage, he took as established the following points:

- 1) Rejection of Franklin's proposal to confiscate the four monasteries of English Benedictines.

- 2) Rejection of Franklin's proposal to appoint a French prelate to regulate the affairs of American Catholics; the

¹⁵ Quoted by Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 615.

¹⁶ Appendix No. 8, p. 54.

supervision of the American missions should belong to the Papal Nuncio who would always be "in formal correspondence" with the American minister; the appointment of a French ecclesiastic "in private correspondence" with that minister is "desirable," inasmuch as the American government is not expected for some time at least, to establish diplomatic relations with the Court of Rome.

3) "The superior, who is to have jurisdiction over all the Catholics of the American Republic [should] be invested with the character of bishop, with the title of Vicar-Apostolic, or, if acceptable, that he be the bishop of a diocese in that country."

4) "Present conditions seem clearly to indicate that they [candidates for the episcopacy as well as for the missions] should be taken from among the ecclesiastical subjects of His Most Christian Majesty"; but, when available for the sacred ministry, natives should be ordained.

5) A college would be most useful, but "the magnitude of the idea would make its realization difficult"; great and expensive things should not be sought.

6) Therefore it might be better to increase the income of some seminary where a reasonable number of students, say eight or ten to begin, would be maintained.

7) It will be possible, if there be a desire to form a national clergy, to establish two or three places for Americans at the college of the Propaganda.

As regards the information requested by the Nuncio, the Prefect has this to write:

The number [of the faithful in the United States] is not precisely known to this Holy Congregation, which is also without exact information of the number of the old workers, who for the greater part, were of the suppressed Society of Jesus; for neither directly, nor through the Vicar-Apostolic of London, has news been received concerning those Catholics.

Finally, trusting the Nuncio's zeal and activity, and his better information on the state of affairs, the Prefect leaves it to his judgment to decide "which of the points noted above should be communicated to the minister, and which not." This latter direction may well arrest attention for an understanding of the rôle of France, and whether in anything she had taken the initiative, or had merely, although willingly, complied with the wishes of the Roman authorities. Primarily, the Prefect seems to have had in mind simply cooperation in the form of material assistance from France. Although at Franklin's suggestion he was willing to consider the appointment of a French ecclesiastic to serve as bishop or as *agent de liaison* between the Holy See and the United States through the American minister at Paris, he was nevertheless determined to maintain the prerogatives of the Holy See in matters of Church government. The Nuncio faithfully carried out the directions he received; he kept Vergennes informed of the progress made, but it was he who continued to treat with Franklin. In answer to the Prefect's letter, he wrote, October 20th, from Fontainebleau: ¹⁷

After informing the Count of Vergennes of all that Your Eminence has been pleased to suggest . . . concerning the missions that it is proposed to establish in the provinces of the new republic . . . I will continue to treat on this subject till its conclusion with Mr. Franklin, minister plenipotentiary of that republic.

The second meeting of the delegates of the clergy of Maryland and Pennsylvania took place at Whitemarsh on November 4th, and was devoted to a thorough discussion and revision of the plan of government of the clergy framed at the June meeting. A committee was appointed to draw up a petition to the Holy See requesting confirmation of the Reverend John Lewis as ecclesiastical superior and, "until otherwise provided for this mission by His Holiness," to vest

¹⁷ Appendix No. 9, p. 57.

him with the power of confirming, and of consecrating chalices, altar-stones and the oils for Extreme Unction.¹⁸ The reasons set forth in this petition are worth mentioning, as they indicate the feeling of the American clergy at that date towards the new American government:

Placed under the recent supreme dominion of the United States, they can no longer have recourse, as formerly, for necessary spiritual jurisdiction to the Bishops and Vicars Apostolic residing in different and foreign states (for this has very frequently been intimated by the rulers of this Republic), nor recognize any one of them as their ecclesiastical superior, without open offence of this supreme civil magistracy and political government.

As asking for confirmation of their choice of superior appeared rather bold to some members of the clergy, another committee was appointed (of which John Carroll was a member) to draft a second petition to the Holy See, requesting permission to elect their own superior, and adding that the United States Government would not permit the presence of a bishop in the country. The clergy were keenly conscious of the "republican jealousy" of Protestant Americans against the episcopacy.

Father Carroll, in carrying out his instruction to forward the second petition to Rome through one of his friends, added the following comments:¹⁹ The toleration accorded Christians of all denominations makes it imperative for Catholics to avoid giving "jealousies on account of any dependence on foreign jurisdiction more than that which is essential to our religion, an acknowledgment of the Pope's spiritual supremacy." He recognized that American Catholics would not be suffered to continue under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic of London, any more than the Anglicans under that of the Bishop of London; hence he saw the necessity of "soliciting the Holy See to place the episcopal

¹⁸ Guilday, pp. 170-71.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

powers, at least such as are most essential, in the hands of one amongst them," and suggested as most desirable Father Lewis, the superior *pro tempore*. He then added these words, so significant for an understanding of the rôle which American Jesuits, as well as Roman prelates, expected France to play: "We shall endeavor to have you aided in this application by a recommendation, if possible, from our own country and the minister of France." Had the American clergy in those fateful days entertained a distrust of France, it is hardly likely that they would have turned to her then, and again later, for assistance. Towards the end of May 1784 the two petitions of the American clergy reached Rome and brought about the decision to appoint John Carroll as Prefect Apostolic. It preceded by few days a similar recommendation, written by the Paris Nuncio May 12th, at Franklin's suggestion.

Franklin, before abandoning his plan, had written at least two letters on the subject—one addressed to Vergennes, and the other to Jérôme Marie Champion de Cissé, Archbishop of Bordeaux. To Vergennes, December 15, 1783, he disclosed his motive for wishing that "one should be appointed [superior of the American clergy] who is of this nation and who may reside here among our friends."²⁰ He said:

I understand that the bishop or spiritual person who superintends or governs the Roman Catholic Clergy in the United States of America resides in London, and is supposed to be under obligations to that court and subject to be influenced by its minister. This gives me some uneasiness.

The American statesman was merely repeating what he had written in reply to the Nuncio's note of July 28th:

The American Revolution, by separating the interests of the colonies from those of the mother country, changes the relations that bound the Catholics of America with those who live under

²⁰ Appendix No. 10, p. 57.

English dominion. The unity of the present government seems even to require that those bonds be diminished and weakened by taking from the British Ministry all influence over the subjects of the United States.

The motive, as might be expected from a secular statesman, was a purely political one, and there was not the least intimation that the proposal made to Vergennes was intended by Franklin as a reward for services rendered by France to America. His only concern was to secure more completely his country's independence from England.

Franklin's letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux unfortunately has not been found, but it contained a similar request for French assistance, and elicited a prompt reply, December 27th,²¹ in which the prelate spoke of his "eagerness to second your views . . . by the help of the [French] Catholics of whose assistance I can easily assure you." The Archbishop then requested the American Minister to secure such practical information as would enable him to facilitate that assistance, viz:

1. How has the service of Catholics been up to the present?
2. If the powers of the Catholic priests come directly from Rome, or if the Bishop of Quebec has any jurisdiction in America?
3. If the living (subsistence) of the Catholic Priests is assured and by what means?

On the same day the Archbishop informed Vergennes²² that the object of Franklin's request was "to secure to religion among the Catholics of the United States more order and facility in the number and choice of the necessary ministers." He continued: "Mr. Franklin . . . seems to desire that to attain more securely what they propose, they should have in France an accredited ecclesiastic, appointed to provide for the needs of religion." Champion de Cissé assuming that in this matter Franklin interpreted the attitude

²¹ Appendix No. 11, p. 58.

²² Appendix No. 12, p. 59.

of his Catholic compatriots, found two reasons for recommending the plan: besides furthering the interest of religion, by providing for its adequate administration, it would strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two nations. He therefore urged the Prime Minister not to let pass this opportunity of serving "at the same time our faith, our Prince, and the two nations." He awaited Vergennes' instructions before giving a definite answer to Franklin, and expressed his readiness to lay before Vergennes such means as he thought might accomplish the desired end. In replying, January 8, 1784,²³ the Prime Minister merely informed the Archbishop that he had laid the matter before the Bishop of Autun.

Extreme caution seems to have marked Vergennes' reaction to Franklin's proposal at this time.²⁴ Before answering the American minister's letter he communicated it to the Bishop of Autun, who on January 4, 1784, forwarded his "Observations on the letter of M. Franklin to Comte de Vergennes under the date of December 15, 1783." This document seems to have escaped the researches of the authors who, so far, have written on the subject. It speaks for itself:

The sole object of M. Franklin is to obviate the political inconvenience resulting from the residence in London of the Bishop or ecclesiastical superior of the Roman Catholics of the United States of America. He asks for a French subject who should reside on the spot and had no relation with the Court of London.

Msgr. the Nuncio wishes that the King's kindness might prompt him to make the religious establishment of a mission in behalf of

²³ Appendix No. 13, p. 61.

²⁴ On Franklin's letter there are two marginal notes in the writing of M. de Rayneval, the minister's secretary. The first analyzes the letter: "M. Franklin represents that the Bishop charged with the direction of the Catholic Clergy in America residing in London, it is of our interest to name for this post a person who may reside in the United States." Franklin had said, "here," i. e., in France. The other marginal note is as follows: "Sent for translation to M. the Bishop of Autun."

the same Catholics, and, to that end, that subjects destined to form and maintain these establishments might be educated in France.

According to that plan, twenty boys of different ages would be needed, who should be educated, as formerly "les enfants de langues," twelve in a college and eight in a seminary. Their education would last till they were twenty-four, and would cost the state 20.000 *livres* a year, at the rate of 1.000 L. per subject. Every year there would be two of these students coming to the end of their studies, and ready to be sent to America.

It would also enter into the plan of Msgr. the Nuncio that the king might grant 12.000 L. a year for the endowment of a Bishop, or of the Prefect Apostolic, who would be appointed superior in those parts.

It is likely that Msgr. the Nuncio would besides submit this nomination to the Propaganda.

It is very important to examine the plan of Msgr. the Nuncio under all its aspects and to adapt it to the views of M. Franklin, before taking a final decision.²⁵

That decision was long coming, for the following May Vergennes wrote to the French minister in the United States that he had conferred with the Nuncio "on the project of establishing a bishop or apostolic vicar in America," and that he had not yet "sufficient information to form a proper resolution."²⁶

If we pause to review the development of the negotiation for the reorganization of the American missions in its initial phase, which covers the year 1783, a clear idea is obtained of the part played by the French officials—the Comte de Vergennes, the Bishop of Autun, and the Archbishop of Bordeaux—who were brought into it. The matter was broached by the Roman authorities who, from the beginning, counted on the generous cooperation of that Catholic country which had been the first to lend its aid to the struggling colonies in their war for independence. When Franklin was in possession of the Nuncio's note, his fertile mind formed

²⁵ For French original see Appendix No. 14, p. 61.

²⁶ Bancroft, p. 360.

projects intended to render secure even in religious matters America's freedom from England; and realizing the poverty of the American Catholics in money, and perhaps in men, he, like the Nuncio, turned to France with plans necessitating for their execution the cooperation of a friendly nation. These plans, when submitted to the French officials, did not, however, all elicit the same approval; educational projects and those for the maintenance of missionaries met with immediate promises of financial assistance, but when it was a question of conferring upon a French prelate authority over American missions, the men responsible for the policy of the French government exhibited a reserve which continued throughout the whole negotiation and was reflected, as will be shown, in the attitude of the French diplomatic agents in the United States.

APPENDICES TO CHAPTER II

1. Instructions for the Nuncio in Paris, January 15, 1783
2. The Nuncio in Paris to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda, February 10, 1783
3. The Cardinal Prefect to the Nuncio, March 19, 1783
4. Note of the Nuncio to Franklin, July 28, 1783
5. Franklin's Observations on the Note of the Nuncio (undated)
6. Franklin's Note on American Catholics (undated)
7. The Nuncio to the Cardinal Prefect, September 1, 1783
8. The Cardinal Prefect to the Nuncio, September 27, 1783
9. The Nuncio to the Cardinal Prefect, October 20, 1783
10. Franklin to the Comte de Vergennes, December 15, 1783
11. The Archbishop of Bordeaux to Franklin, December 27, 1783
12. (a) The Archbishop of Bordeaux to the Comte de Vergennes, December 27, 1783 (translation)
(b) French original of above
13. The Comte de Vergennes to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, January 8, 1784 (draft in French)
14. French original of Talleyrand's Observations on Franklin's letter of December 15, 1783 (undated)

1. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE NUNCIO IN PARIS¹

Instructions for His Lordship the Nuncio to France, sent with a letter of the Congregation, on the 15th of January, 1783, with the approval of the Holy Father.

On the occasions when a general peace has been concluded among the princes of Europe, the Holy See has watched with all solicitude for the interests that are common to the faith, or for those that are special to itself, namely, its patrimony and its jurisdiction. Wherefore, it has sent to the various peace congresses, either cardinals, as legates a latere, or prelates with the character of Apostolic nuncios. The peace that is to be concluded, now, by the belligerent powers of Europe is not of sufficient importance for the adoption of such measures, either in itself, or in its relation to the faith in general, or to the rights of the Apostolic See in particular. Nevertheless, the independence of the United Provinces of America having been established, and it being possible to foresee that some other country or province may pass under a new rule, it seems expedient that the Holy Father take thought and care for the exercise and for the maintenance of the Catholic religion in those states.

To this end, it is necessary that Monseigneur the Nuncio be informed that all the possessions of England on the continent, or on the islands, of America were in spiritual dependence upon the Vicar-Apostolic of London, not only in accordance with a very ancient custom, but, also, upon the authority of the decrees of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, approved by several of the Sovereign Pontiffs; to which, however, there is the exception of Canada, where, after the territory had passed under British dominion, its own Bishop was left to it, at Quebec, as under French rule, conformably with article IV. of the treaty that was signed at Paris on the 10th of February, 1763. All the missionaries of the remainder of those vast territories received their powers for the exercise of the apostolic ministry from the Vicar-Apostolic of London. The number of Catholics in those English possessions, and the extent to which the Catholic religion flourishes there, are not known with precision. According to the report of 1756, which is the last on this subject that the Vicar-Apostolic of London sent to the Congregation of the Propaganda, there were in

¹ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-190.

Maryland ten thousand Catholic communicants, assisted by twelve priests of the suppressed Society of Jesus; in Pennsylvania, five thousand, who, also, were under the care of Jesuit missionaries, of whom there were four; in Virginia, New York, and Jersey, there were only Catholics scattered here and there about the country, and the Vicar was not informed whether they had priests to administer the sacraments to them, or whether the practice of their religion was tolerated. Now, as the approaching declaration of the independence of all these provinces will destroy the bonds of their political and civil subordination to the British government, it will thereby destroy all bonds in religious matters, and therefore, the Vicar-Apostolic of London will be deprived of the influence and direction that he has exercised, until now, in the religious affairs of those provinces. Under the present circumstances, therefore, the effort of the Apostolic Nuncio to the court of France should be to effectively engage the zeal and piety of His Most Christian Majesty, to the end that, through the influence which he has with the leaders of the American Congress, he may be pleased to procure an article concerning the free exercise and the maintenance of the Catholic religion, in the solemn convention of peace, which is to be guaranteed by the public faith; all the more, since the Catholic religion may have made some progress in that country, on account of the stay of the French troops there.

Besides these general interests, which the most Christian king, as her first born, should make his own for the development of the Catholic Church, there is the consideration that many subjects of His Majesty, either remain in those provinces, have places there, or frequently go there for commercial reasons, and it should be near the heart of His Majesty that his subjects find in that country priests who may administer the sacraments to them and assist them in all their other spiritual needs.

On other occasions, the Holy See has had experience of the efficacy of the protection that the king of France has given to religion when similar treaties of peace were to be concluded. The fourth article of the treaty of Ryswick, signed in 1697, may be a sufficient example. Louis XIV had invaded with his victorious armies all the states of the Palatinate, which were infested with heresy; and as the Catholic religion had made progress through the sojourn of the French troops in those lands, the fourth article of the treaty in question was agreed upon as follows: "But the Roman

Catholic religion, in the places so restored, will remain in the state in which it now is." And the fourth article of the treaty of Paris of 1763, mentioned above, is not less favorable or efficacious, seeing that the Catholic religion is maintained, and flourishes, by it, in Canada, a country governed by a heretical power. On the other hand, if the opportunity should be found at the court of France for the insertion of an article directed toward the preservation of the public exercise of the Catholic religion in the republic of the United Provinces of America, the task then should be to seek the patronage of His Most Christian Majesty for concerting a plan of missions and missionaries for the service of Catholics living in that republic. As these have been subject, until now, to the Vicar-Apostolic of London, the most obvious and the most desirable plan would be to establish in one of the principal cities a Vicar-Apostolic, with episcopal character, chosen from among the subjects of the new republic, who should receive from the Holy See powers for the spiritual government of the Catholics of all those regions, and who, thereafter, should receive the charge of establishing various missionary stations, more or less numerous, according to the requirements of each province. A bishop Vicar-Apostolic is proposed, because he would be able to supply all needs, whether of the administration of the sacrament of confirmation, or of the ordination of clerics among the subjects of the new republic, and national jealousy would thus be obviated, by not constraining these new republicans to receive those sacraments from foreign bishops. But, if for other reasons the leaders of the American Congress should be loath to admit a bishop into their country, there might be substituted, instead, a general prefect of those missions, who, receiving the same title and powers of Vicar-Apostolic, could perform the episcopal functions in all, except in the administration of holy orders. If natives should be found available, they should always be preferred, whether for the vicariate-apostolic with episcopal character, or for the simple prefecture, as also, for the office of missionary; but, if available natives should not be found, there should be permission to appoint foreigners, always, however, from among the most impartial and acceptable to the government.

There should be, also, an agreement concerning means for the temporal subsistence of these evangelical ministers. It is doubtful, however, that the government will concur to that end, no matter how much the interests of a people require that it be sufficiently in-

structed in the rule which it is allowed to profess and that those who are intrusted with the care of such instruction, which makes men good and faithful citizens and which is inseparable from the public good, be supported by the public. But, not to allow temporal obstacles to stand in the way of the spiritual interests of so many of the faithful, the Congregation of the Propaganda will be ready to assign an allowance to the bishop or to the prefect vicar-apostolic, hoping that the other missionaries will receive their support from the charity of the faithful, and especially that if they be Frenchmen and for the service of subjects of His Most Christian Majesty, they will receive it from his royal and liberal munificence.

2. THE NUNCIO IN PARIS TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE PROPAGANDA ²

At the conference of Tuesday [February 4] of last week, I informed the Count of Vergennes of the solicitation that was transmitted to me through Your Eminence, with the Holy Father's command, of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for the insertion of some article, directed towards the preservation and extension of the Catholic religion, in the treaty that is about to be concluded among the powers that have recently been at war. That royal minister has already taken pains to secure peace in religious matters for those subjects who return to British rule, by article VIII of the preliminaries of peace that were signed at Versailles by him, as minister plenipotentiary of the Most Christian King, and by Mr. Alleyne Fitz-Herbert, minister plenipotentiary of the king of Great Britain; and he will have the same interest at heart in the formulation of the treaty of peace, to which end he will have in mind the stipulations of the treaty of 1763, bearing upon religion. As regards the United States of North America, which, in future, are to be recognized as a new sovereign republic, the count promises himself that, as all religions, and their public practice, are tolerated in that country, upon principle, there will be consent, not only to the presence of Catholic missionaries, but, also, to the appointment of one of the citizens of that country as Vicar-Apostolic with episcopal character. I begged him to inform Mr. Franklin, minister plenipotentiary of the republic of the United States of North America, that I would have spoken to him of this matter, as I will do, when I shall have

² Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

heard from the Count of Vergennes what Mr. Franklin may have had to say on the subject. Expecting to inform Your Eminence of the result of my course in the premises, and ever ready to follow your respected commands, I am happy to be, with all homage,

Of Your Eminence

the very Humble, Devoted, and Grateful Servant,

G. Archbishop of *Seleucia*.

Paris, February 10th, 1783.

3. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO AT PARIS.³

To Mgr. the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris.

March 19th, 1783.

It has been a great consolation to me to learn of the solicitude that this worthy minister, the Count of Vergennes, has to secure, in the treaty of peace with England, the tranquility of our holy Catholic religion, and of the hope that he gives us, not only that Catholic missionaries will be tolerated in the United States of America, but that a native Vicar-Apostolic, with episcopal character, may be elected for that country, which may greatly promote the welfare of souls and the propagation of the faith. Meanwhile, I shall await with impatience the result of the interview that you expected to have, in this connection, with Mr. Franklin, minister plenipotentiary of that republic. . . .

4. NOTE OF THE NUNCIO TO FRANKLIN.⁴

[July 28, 1783]

Before the revolution that has just been consummated in North America, the Catholics and the missionaries of those provinces were in spiritual dependence upon the Vicar-Apostolic residing at Lon-

³ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195. This note was accompanied by the following letter: "The Apostolical Nuncio has the honor to send Mr. Franklin the enclosed note, which he requests he will be pleased to forward to the Congress of the United States of North America, and to support it with his credit." Bigelow, *The Complete Works of Franklin*, Vol. VIII, p. 321.

don. It is obvious that this arrangement can not be continued; but, as it is essential that the Catholic subjects of the United States have an ecclesiastic to govern them in what concerns their religion, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, which exists at Rome, with a view to the establishment and preservation of the missions, has determined to propose to the congress the installation of one of their Catholics subjects, in some city of the United States of North America, with the powers of vicar-apostolic, and with the character of bishop, or simply as prefect apostolic. The establishment of a bishop vicar-apostolic seems to be preferable, all the more, since this would enable the Catholic subjects of the United States to receive Confirmation and Holy Orders in their own country, instead of being obliged to go to foreign countries to receive those sacraments; and as it might happen, at times, that no one be found among the subjects of the United States qualified to be entrusted with the spiritual government, whether as bishop or as prefect apostolic, it would be necessary in such cases that congress be pleased to consent that the choice be made among the subjects of a foreign nation, the most friendly to the United States.

5. FRANKLIN'S OBSERVATIONS ON THE NOTE OF M. THE APOSTOLIC NUNCIO.⁵

[Undated]

Mr. Franklin, after reading the note of M. the Nuncio and reflecting upon it maturely, believes that it would be absolutely useless to send it to the congress, which, according to its powers and its constitutions, can not, and should not, in any case, intervene in the ecclesiastical affairs of any sect or of any religion established in America. Each particular State has reserved to itself by its own constitutions the right to protect its members, to tolerate their religious opinions, and not to interfere with the matter, as long as they do not disturb civil order.

Mr. Franklin is therefore of opinion that the Court of Rome may take, of its own initiative, all the measures that may be useful to the Catholics of America, without disregard to the constitutions, and that Congress will not fail to give its tacit approval to the choice that the Court of Rome, in concert with the minister of the United States, may make of a French ecclesiastic, who, residing in France,

⁵ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

may regulate the spiritual affairs of the Catholics who live, or who may come to establish themselves, in those States, through a suffragan residing in America.

Besides many political reasons that may make that arrangement desirable, M. the Apostolic Nuncio must find in it many others that may be favorable to the intentions of the Court of Rome.

6. FRANKLIN'S NOTE ON AMERICAN CATHOLICS.⁶

[Undated]

The American Revolution, by separating the interests of the colonies from those of the mother country, changes the relations that bound the Catholics of America with those who live under English dominion. The unity of the present government seems even to require that those bonds be diminished and weakened by taking from the British ministry all influence over the subjects of the United States.

In the greater number of the colonies, there is no endowment, no fixed revenue, for the support of a clergy of whatever denomination; legislation, viewing this subject from the standpoint of a more general freedom, has been unwilling to make a public charge of a tax that should [could] be only voluntary and private.

Neither is there a college or public establishment where a Catholic ecclesiastic may receive necessary instruction; these are two equally essential points to be considered.

There are in France four establishments of English monks, the total revenues of which may amount to 50,000 or 60,000 livres. These monks are few. The want of subjects makes those who remain useless, at least.

It is [might be] possible that the king of France, to please the Court of Rome and to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the United States, would permit these establishments [to be used] to train, instruct, and in part support the ecclesiastics who would be used in America.

It would be expedient [better to secure this object] that one of the bishops named by the Holy See should be a subject of the king, residing in France, in a position, always, to act in accordance with the Nuncio of His Holiness and the American minister, and to

⁶ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197; the words in brackets are our corrections.

adopt with them the means of training the ecclesiastics, which might be agreeable to Congress and useful to American Catholics.

7. THE NUNCIO TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT.⁷

I have the honor of transmitting to Your Eminence, herewith, three papers, marked A, B, and C, respectively, and relating to the establishment of apostolic missions in the new republic of the United States of North America, which matter was committed to me. The first is the copy of a note, or memorandum, that I sent to Mr. Franklin, minister plenipotentiary of the new republic; the second and third are copies of a note of Mr. Franklin and of some observations made by him on the subject of my note just mentioned. In order to take time to send a categorical reply to Mr. Franklin, I merely acknowledged the receipt of these papers, in which Your Eminence will find Mr. Franklin to be of opinion that our court, or, in other words, the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, will be free to take all measures that may be useful to the Catholics of America, without infringing the constitutions, and that the congress will not fail to tacitly approve the choice that the Sacred Congregation may make, in concert with the minister plenipotentiary of the United States, of a French ecclesiastic, who, residing in France, may regulate the affairs of Catholics in America, through a suffragan there. In this connection, I am of the opinion that, rather than a French ecclesiastic, the apostolic nuncio for the time being in France, in concert with that Sacred Congregation, might, himself, invest an ecclesiastic with the character of bishop, of prefect, or of vicar-apostolic for the government in question. There being in America, as Mr. Franklin says in his note C, no college or establishment in which a Catholic ecclesiastic may receive the instruction that it is necessary for him to have, nor the hope of a public appropriation for such a purpose, Your Eminence will recognize that recourse must be had to other means in this connection, and that those suggested by Mr. Franklin in his note C, concerning the four establishments of English Religious that exist in France, could not, and should not, be proposed, much less, accepted. The last paragraph of that note deserves all attention, tending, as it does, to the attainment of desirable ends. I have thought it well to give information of the contents of these papers to the Count of Vergennes, a true statesman, full of

⁷ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-195.

zeal and attachment for our holy Catholic religion; and as I begged of him to facilitate the means of establishing a college in France for the education of as many priests as may be necessary for the spiritual welfare of the Roman Catholics who now are, or may come to be, in the States of the new republic, the royal minister, assuring me that he will give all the assistance that it may be in his power to lend in that connection, suggested that I speak to Monseigneur the bishop of Autun, minister of ecclesiastical benefices of this realm, in order that he, by his lights, and by his good offices, may assist in the establishment of the proposed college, at St. Malo, Nantes, l'Orient, or any other city of France, near the coast, it being necessary, however, first to obtain the requisite funds, and to know, approximately, the number of priests that the Roman Catholics of the United States may need, and whether there be in that country, individuals inclined to undertake the studies and to adopt the ecclesiastical state. Accordingly, I had an interview with Monseigneur the bishop of Autun, on Wednesday, and we agreed to confer together, on Saturday of last week, with the Count of Vergennes. To this end, on the day appointed, I went to Versailles, and the Count of Vergennes, as well as the above named prelate, showed himself to be most desirous of obtaining the funds necessary for so important an end. While this matter is being thought over, I trust that Your Eminence will give me what information you have in regard to the mission of North America, and will obtain further information from the prelate who is in charge of that mission, requesting him to give the number of priests that there are in those states, and the number of them that may be needed there. In quest of this information, after receiving the answer of Your Eminence, I will endeavor to obtain that the Count of Vergennes write to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, who has been minister plenipotentiary of the Most Christian King to the United States of North America for the last three years, and who is much esteemed and loved there. On the other hand, Your Eminence will deign to inform neither the ecclesiastic just mentioned nor any one else, with the exception of the Holy Father, of my negotiations with the Count of Vergennes and with Monseigneur the bishop of Autun, since it is question, as yet, of a mere project, of which it would not be well to speak before it be realized, or developed sufficiently not to be frustrated by any one who may

regard the proposed establishment unfavorably. Ready ever to comply with the revered commands of Your Eminence, I subscribe myself, with all homage,

Of Your Eminence,

the Very Humble, Devoted, and Grateful Servant

G. Archbishop of *Seleucia*.

Paris, September 1st, 1783.

8. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.⁸

To Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris.

September 27th, 1783.

Your Lordship has so well begun the great matter of a plan for missions in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America that I do not doubt that you will soon bring it to a most happy termination. The Holy Father, who has been informed of your action, has greatly commended your zeal, and your sagacity in having interested the Count of Vergennes and Monseigneur the bishop of Autun in this salutary work, the former, for his protection as worthy prime minister, the latter, for the subsistence of the new workers, in view of his ministry of ecclesiastical benefices in that kingdom. This Holy Congregation, however, does not withdraw from its original offer to assist in the support of the Vicar-Apostolic endowed with the episcopal character, or of a bishop, if this should be preferred, whom it will be necessary to put at the head of the Catholics in the United States.

Conformably with the judicious suggestions of Your Lordship, the following points should be established:

I. The proposition of Mr. Franklin, to suppress the four monasteries of English Benedictines that exist in France, should be rejected, without further discussion. Besides the odium that would be aroused in that nation, which would be highly displeasing to the pacific and generous spirit of His Most Christian Majesty, grievous injury would be done to the missions of England, if the four monasteries in question should be suppressed, since the English Benedictine congregation, which furnishes nearly forty missionaries who work for the good of souls in England, would be reduced to the one monastery

⁸ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-202.

that, with the four in France, constitutes the total number of the convents of that worthy congregation.

II. The Nuncio to France, as Your Lordship opportunely suggested to Mr. Franklin, should have the supervision of these American missions, as is the case with the Nuncio at Brussels for the missions of Holland, and he would come to an understanding with the minister of the United States at Paris, whenever it was necessary to act in accordance with him for the greater good of those missions. This arrangement would also be compatible with an agent of the Vicar-Apostolic, or of the Bishop to be established in the United States, at Paris, in the person of some French ecclesiastic, who, upon occasion, would act in concert with the minister of those States and with the nuncio. It is to be desired that, some day, this new republic may have a Catholic minister at Paris; but, in the present circumstances, in which the minister is heretical, possibly Presbyterian, or Non-Conformist, which are the dominant sects in those states, it would be desirable to have a French ecclesiastic in private correspondence with the head of that mission, saving always the formal correspondence between the nuncio and the minister.

III. It was suggested above, and is repeated now, that it appears very necessary to establish that the superior, who is to have jurisdiction over all the Catholics of the American Republic, be invested with the character of bishop, with the title of Vicar-Apostolic, or, if acceptable, that he be the bishop of a diocese in that country. He may take his title from any city in the provinces of that republic that may seem to be the one best adapted for his residence. As the greater number of Catholics are in Maryland and in Pennsylvania, it would appear that the residence should be established in one of these two states; but it will be better to determine this point according to what may be most satisfactory to the minister and to the states. There is no doubt that all the missionaries should depend upon the Vicar-Apostolic, or bishop, and receive from him their powers and destination among the various stations, according to requirements. And, to that end, the Prelate will be invested with the most ample powers, as for instance, those of the first formula.

IV. As to the subjects to be chosen, for the vicariate apostolic, or the episcopacy, as well as for missionaries, present conditions seem clearly to indicate that they should be taken from among the ecclesiastical subjects of His Most Christian Majesty. But if in time any native should be found available for the sacred ministry, there is no

doubt that the Vicar or Bishop would be free to ordain him and to employ him in the missions.

V. It would be most useful to establish a college for the sole benefit of these missionaries, at Nantes, St. Malo, l'Orient, or some other place, near the Ocean; but it may be foreseen that the magnitude of the idea would make its realization difficult. It is clearly understood that Monseigneur d'Autun, by his favor, could overcome all obstacles; but great and expensive things, as would be the creation of a new college, should not be sought.

VI. Consideration might be given, therefore, to the idea of increasing to some extent the income of the Seminary of Foreign Missions, where ecclesiastics, already, are trained for the East Indies; or, better still, the seminary of Saint Esprit, the ecclesiastics of which are destined to the missions of South America, at Cayenne and Guiana, imposing upon it the obligation of maintaining there, for the present, a reasonable number of ecclesiastics, to be sent under the suggested authority in America to the provinces of the United States. If, to begin, eight or ten missionaries are sent, besides the vicar, or bishop, this will provide sufficiently for the needs of the faithful in question, the number of whom is not precisely known to this Holy Congregation, which is also without exact information of the number of the old workers, who, for the greater part, were of the suppressed Society of Jesus; for, neither directly, nor through the Vicar-Apostolic of London, has news been received concerning those Catholics, of whom some information was sent to Your Lordship in the instruction of the 15th of January of the present year.

VII. If the number of workers suggested should prove to be insufficient, it will be time, then, to think of other means of study for a greater number of subjects, and it will be possible, even, if there be a desire to form a national clergy, to establish at the college of the Propaganda, here, two or three places for Americans, as has been done for so many nations of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Your Lordship, however, who is better informed of the state of affairs, will know which of the points noted above should be communicated to the minister, and which not; upon this point, His Holiness and this Congregation repose on your known zeal and activity, of which there are so many exceptional proofs; and thanking Your Lordship for the letter which you enclosed from Monseigneur the Vicar-Apostolic of London, I remain, with all esteem, heartily yours.

9. THE NUNCIO TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT.⁹

After informing the Count of Vergennes of all that Your Eminence has been pleased to suggest in your honored communication of the 27th of last month, concerning the missions that it is proposed to establish in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America, I will continue to treat on this subject till its conclusion with Mr. Franklin, minister plenipotentiary of that republic, rejoicing, meanwhile, that the Holy Father and the Congregation be pleased with what I have done so far. When Mr. John Thayer, native of Boston, presents himself to me with the recommendation of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, I will receive him well; and if he persevere in the intention of adopting the ecclesiastical state, to serve his country as a missionary, and Mr. Franklin offers no objection to it, I will make use of the faculties with which I am invested by the Pontifical rescript that Your Eminence has forwarded to me.

Of Your Eminence, the Very Humble, Devoted, and Grateful Servant

G. Archbishop (of Selevicia).

Fontainebleau, October 20th, 1783.

10. FRANKLIN TO THE COMTE DE VERGENNES.¹⁰

Envoyé à la Traduction à

M^{re} l'Eveque d'Autun

le 29 Xbre 1783

M. de R[ayneval]

Passy, Dec. 15, 1783

Sir,

M. franklin représente que l'Eveque chargé de la direction du Clergé Catholique en Amérique, résidant à Londres; il est de notre intérêt de nommer à cette place une personne qui puisse demeurer dans les Etats unis.

I understand that the Bishop or spiritual Person who superintends or governs the Roman Catholic Clergy in the United States of America resides in London, and is supposed to be under obligation to that Court, and subject to be influenced by its Minister. This gives me some uneasiness, and I cannot but wish that one should be appointed to that office, who is of this Nation and who may reside here among our Friends. I beg your Excellency to

⁹ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

¹⁰ From the original in the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères: Etats-Unis, Vol. 26, p. 200.

think a little of this Matter, and to afford
me your Counsels upon it. With the great-
est Respect, I am

Sir,

your Excellency's most
obedient and most humble servant

B. FRANKLIN

His Excellency
the Count de Vergennes.

11. THE ARCHBISHOP OF BORDEAUX TO FRANKLIN.¹¹

Paris, 27 Dec., 1783

I have received, Sir, the letter which you have done me the honor to write me on the subject of the American Catholics. You can rest assured, in this case as in all the others, of my eagerness to second your views both by the help of the Catholics of whose assistance I can easily assure you, and of the favor of M. l'Abbe de la Roche, whom I love and esteem. I need at present some information which undoubtedly you can give me. I wish to know:

1. How has the service of Catholics been up to the present?
2. If the powers of the Catholic priests come directly from Rome, or if the Bishop of Quebec has any jurisdiction in America?
3. If the living (subsistence) of the Catholic Priests is assured and by what means?

This information will help me in proposing my views to you in the future. Do not doubt, I pray you, of the sincere and respectful affection with which I have the honor to be your most humble and most obedient servant,

J. M., *Archbishop of Bordeaux*.¹²

¹¹ Translation by Martin I. Griffin, *The American Catholic Historical Researches*, 1910, p. 345. Griffin wrongly dates it 27 Sept.

¹² The Archbishop of Bordeaux at this time was Jérôme Marie Champion de Cissé.

12(a). THE ARCHBISHOP OF BORDEAUX TO THE
COMTE DE VERGENNES.¹³

Paris, 27 December, 1783.

I regard it a duty, Count, to inform you of the proposition just made me by Mr. Franklin. The object is to secure to religion among the Catholics of the United States more order and facility in the number and choice of the necessary ministers. I have reason to believe that in this matter Mr. Franklin is the interpreter of the wishes of his Catholic fellow-citizens. He seems to desire that to attain more securely what they propose, they should have in France an accredited ecclesiastic, appointed to provide for the needs of religion. This care of a prudent and solicitous Legislature deserves the attention of all, but the support it promises to Religion renders it even more respectable in our eyes; I find in it further claims on our attention. I think that it offers a means of uniting more strongly by the powerful bonds of Religion, those bonds happily already formed between France and the United States. Never, perhaps, will a more favorable occasion present itself to serve at the same time our faith, our Prince, and the two nations. This occasion you should not let pass. I thought it my duty to point it out to you before giving a definite answer to Mr. Franklin. In answering him, I content myself, for the moment, with asking him some questions relative to his proposal and which I must see answered. I have the greatest confidence in your lights and your counsels will always be precious to me, whether you consider that proposition in itself or in connection with its accessory results. In the latter case I could submit to you the means which have occurred to me to carry out the work more perfectly. You know, Count, the sentiments of respectful attachment with which I have the honor to be your most humble and obedient servant.

JER MAR. *Arch. of Bordeaux*.¹⁴

¹³ Endorsed: "M. de R[ayneval] replied January 8, 1784." Translated from the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Vol. 26.

¹⁴ Jérôme Marie Champion de Cissé.

12(b). L'ARCHEVEQUE DE BORDEAUX AU COMTE
DE VERGENNES.¹⁵

Paris le 27 Xbre 1783

Je me fais un devoir, Monsieur le Comte, de vous instruire de la démarche que M. Franklin vient de faire auprès de moi, elle a pour objet d'assurer à la Religion, parmi les Catholiques des Etats Unis, plus d'ordre et de facilité, dans le nombre et le choix des ministres qui lui sont nécessaires. je présume avec raison qu'à cet égard M. Franklin est l'interprète de ses concitoyens Catholiques. il paroît désirer que pour atteindre plus sûrement la fin qu'ils se proposent, ils aient en France, un Ecclésiastique attitré, qui seroit chargé de pourvoir aux besoins du culte. ce soin d'une Legislation sage et attentive mérite bien l'intérêt général, mais l'affermissement qu'il promet à Religion le rend encore plus respectable pour nous : je lui trouve même des droits ultérieurs à votre attention. elle me paroît offrir un moyen de resserrer avec plus d'énergie par les liens puissans de la Religion, ceux que la politique a déjà si heureusement formés entre la France et les Etats unis. jamais peut-être, il ne reparoitra de moment plus favorable de servir en même tems la foi, le Prince et les deux Nations. ce moment là ne doit point vous échapper. j'ai crû devoir vous l'indiquer avant de répondre décisivement à M. Franklin. je me borne avec lui pour cette fois à quelques questions qui tiennent à la nature de sa proposition et dont la solution m'est nécessaire. j'attendrai vos instructions pour donner une suite à mes idées et les combiner d'après les vôtres. j'ai la plus grande confiance en vos lumières et vos conseils me seront toujours précieux soit que vous considériez cette opération en elle même, soit que vous y réunissiez ses effets accessoires. dans cette dernière supposition il me seroit possible de vous développer les moyens qui se sont présentés à mon Esprit, pour la plus grande perfection de cet ouvrage. Vous connoissés, Monsieur le Comte, les sentimens du respectueux attachement avec lequel j'ai l'honneur d'être, votre très humble et très obeissant serviteur.

✕ *Jer. Mar. arch. de Bordeaux.*¹⁶

¹⁵ Endorsed: "M. de R[ayneval] repd. le 8 Jv. 1784." Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Vol. 26.

¹⁶ Jérôme Marie Champion de Cissé,

13. LE COMTE DE VERGENNES A L'ARCHEVEQUE
DE BORDEAUX.¹⁷

À Versailles, le 8 Janvier 1784

M. l'Archeveque de Bordeaux.

J'ai reçu, M., la lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire le 27 du mois D[écembre]; elle est relative à l'établissement proposé par M. Franklin d'un ecclésiastique en France qui seroit chargé de pourvoir aux besoins du culte de la religion Cque [Catholique] dans les Etats unis de l'Amérique S. p. le [Septentrionale]. J'ai écrit en dernier lieu sur cet objet à M. l'Eveque d'Autun et je m'en occuperai avec ce prélat avec d'autant plus de zèle, que je partage l'opinion que vous avez de son importance.

14. OBSERVATION SUR LA LETTRE DE M. FRANKLIN
À M. LE COMTE DE VERGENNES EN DATTE
DU 15 XBRE 1783.¹⁸

L'unique objet de M. Franklin, est de parer à l'inconvénient politique, qui résulte de la résidence à Londres, de l'Eveque ou supérieur Ecclésiastique des catholiques romains des Etats unis de l'Amérique. Il demande un sujet François qui residat sur les lieux, et qui n'eut aucun rapport avec la cour de Londres.

M. le Nonce voudroit que la bonté du roi le portât à faire l'établissement Religieux d'une mission, en faveur des mêmes catholiques, et pour cela, qu'on élevât en France les sujets destinés à former et soutenir ces établissements.

Selon ce plan, il faudroit vingt enfants de différents âges, qu'on eleveroit comme autrefois les enfants de langues, savoir douze dans un college et huit dans un séminaire. leur Education dureroit jusqu'à vingt quatre ans, et coulerait à l'état 20 000 # par an, à raison de 1 000 # par chaque sujet, tous les ans il y auroit deux de ces élèves dont l'Education finiroit et qu'on pourroit faire partir pour l'Amérique.

¹⁷ From the original draft of Vergennes' answer to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Etats-Unis, Vol. 27, p. 21.

¹⁸ Endorsed: "Le 4 janvier 1784 par M. l'Eveque d'Autun. M. de R[ayneval]." Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Etats-Unis, Vol. 27, p. 15.

Il entreroit encore dans le plan de M. le Nonce que le roi accordât 12 000 # par an, pour la dotation d'un Eveque, ou du prefet apostolique, qui seroit établi supérieur en cette partie.

Il est vraisemblable que M. Le Nonce proposerait encore de soumettre cette nomination à la propagande.

Il est très important d'examiner le plan de M. le nonce, sous tous les Rapports et de l'adapter aux vues de M. franklin, avant que de prendre une resolution definitive.

CHAPTER THREE

FRENCH COOPERATION, MAY 1784

Franklin's letter to the President of Congress, conveying the proposition he had received from the Papal Nuncio, reached America in the late Fall of 1783, and although Congress deferred sending a formal answer until the following May, a communication of the Chevalier de la Luzerne to the Comte de Vergennes under date of January 31, 1784, shows the reactions of the members of that body to the suggestion.¹ The French minister to the United States wrote:

The congress has respectfully welcomed that overture; it has been unable, however, to take action in this matter, which is not of the competency of Congress. It is a matter that concerns Catholics alone.

He was, nevertheless, able to gather from the opinions of congressmen who spoke to him on this subject that, "a Catholic Bishop would be very well received in the state of Pennsylvania, and much more so in Maryland, where there are many Catholics, providing the prelate carefully avoided to assume any temporal jurisdiction or authority." La Luzerne added in a postscript to be found in the original of his letter, and which seems to have been overlooked by American historians: "The Catholics would not be pleased with a foreign Bishop, but they could very well choose the worthiest of their priests and present him to His Holiness for consecration, if he judges him qualified for the episcopal functions."

A comparison of these last lines with the text of the second petition sent to Rome after the second meeting of the clergy in November 1783, and in which it was stated as "imperative for Catholics to avoid giving jealousies on account of any

¹ Appendix No. 1, p. 79.

dependence on foreign jurisdiction more than that which is essential to our religion, an acknowledgment of the Pope's spiritual supremacy," reveals an identity of views expressed by the Chevalier and the American clergy; the minister finds quite natural the preference of American Catholics for one of their own priests, and this view, expressed as early as January 1784, was shared the following August, by his successor, Barbé-Marbois,² who urged Vergennes not to allow the choice of a bishop to fall upon a French priest. As la Luzerne saw the situation, it would be sufficient if the bishop to be appointed would avoid assuming "any temporal jurisdiction and authority," and he went on to say that "the congress, in general, would be pleased at the residence of a prelate, who by conferring the sacrament of Holy Orders on the priests of these parts, would relieve them of the necessity of receiving it in London or in Quebec, as has been done in the past."

La Luzerne's letter to the Comte de Vergennes, which brought to Paris the first intimation of the attitude of Congress to the proposed establishment of a Catholic hierarchy in the United States, reached the French capital on April 23, 1784.³ A few days earlier, April 7th, the Prefect of the Propaganda had written to the Paris Nuncio,⁴ expressing his satisfaction that the Prelate had postponed other matters "to the much more important one concerning the establishment of missions in the united provinces of the new American republic." Though there is a wide gap from October 20, 1783 to April 7, 1784, in the correspondence between the Prefect and the Nuncio which has come to our hands, this letter shows that the Nuncio had maintained his activities

² It was stated in the *Secret Journals of Congress*, February 11, 1784 (Vol. III, p. 493), that "the Sieur de Marbois is appointed Consul General for the thirteen United States." He was to become French Chargé d'Affaires upon la Luzerne's return to France in June, 1784.

³ This is learned from a marginal note on the document by M. de Rayneval.

⁴ Appendix No. 2, p. 80.

in the said establishment. The Prefect awaited with a concern that may well have been imagined by the Nuncio, "the result of the conference with Monseigneur the bishop of Autun and with the royal minister, count of Vergennes," which the Nuncio had arranged, or was arranging at that time. As a matter of fact, on April 26th, three days after la Luzerne's letter arrived in Paris, the Nuncio was able to inform the Cardinal that he had arranged such a conference for May 3rd.

Before giving an account of that most important conference, it is well to consider what had been the reaction of American Catholics to the Roman plan for the reorganization of the Catholic missions, after they learned the content of the Nuncio's note to Franklin. John Carroll, in a letter to Charles Plowden written on the eve of the meeting arranged in Paris by the Papal Nuncio, and dated April 10, 1784, said.⁵

Dr. Franklin has sent into congress a copy of a note delivered him by the nuncio at Paris, which I shall enclose in this. I did not see it before congress had sent their instructions to their minister in answer thereto; and the answer, I am well informed, is, that congress have no answer to give, the matter not being in their department, but resting with the different states. But this you may be assured of; that no authority derived from the Propa[gan]da will ever be admitted here; that the Catholic Clergy and laity know that the only connection they ought to have with Rome is to acknowledge the Pope as Spir[itual] head of the Church; that no Congregations existing in his States shall be allowed to exercise any share of his Spir[itua]l authority here, that no Bishop Vicar Apostolical shall be admitted, and, if we are to have a Bishop, he shall not be *in partibus* (a refined political Roman contrivance), but an ordinary national Bishop, in whose appointment Rome shall have no share: so that we are very easy about their machinations. Our Brethren have, in a meeting held last October, settled or nearly settled a plan of internal

⁵ This quotation is from Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 376, completed and corrected in the light of Hughes' text, *op. cit.*, pp. 619-620 note.

government, which will meet with your approbation, being founded on Christian and rational principles.

Two points of this document are to be noted. Though Carroll claims to be well informed, he is mistaken when he says that Congress had already sent their answer to Franklin, for that answer was not to be sent until May 11th. Its tenor is well known to all:

Resolved, that Doctor Franklin be desired to notify to the apostolic nuncio at Versailles, that Congress will always be pleased to testify their respect to his sovereign and state; but that the subject of his application to doctor Franklin, being purely spiritual, it is without the jurisdiction and powers of Congress, who have no authority to permit or refuse it, these powers being reserved to the several states individually.

In the second place, the letter reflects the deep-rooted opposition of the American clergy to the jurisdiction of the Propaganda over the United States, and regardless of the nationality—American or foreign—of the bishop who might be appointed; it was the jurisdiction of the Propaganda itself that they considered foreign and were prepared to resist.

A very full report from the Nuncio to the Cardinal Prefect, May 17, 1784,⁶ makes it possible to follow in all its details, what occurred at the meeting of May 3rd, arranged by the Nuncio between himself, the Comte de Vergennes, and the Bishop of Autun. At that first meeting, the Prime Minister read an extract from la Luzerne's report of January 31st which had just reached him. The Nuncio recalled the instructions he had received in the Prefect's letter of September 27, 1783, and, in response to a question which had been put to him in the Fall by Vergennes, stated that both the Roman Congregation and he were without information on the number of Catholics in the United States and that, consequently, it would be impossible, at this time, to fix the num-

⁶ Appendix No. 7, p. 84.

ber of missionaries and students for whom France had been asked to provide. He also reported the Propaganda to be of opinion that for the present eight missionaries would be sufficient, that eight or ten students might be sent to France for their education, and the Propaganda would take two or three more under its care. He ended by stating the Congregation's intention to support these three students, and also the bishop *in partibus* or Vicar-Apostolic who would be sent to Maryland.

The question of the most desirable place for the education of American seminarians then came up for discussion. Paris was excluded on the grounds that the seminaries of the French capital did not include humanities in their curriculum, that the colleges were too expensive, and that the seminaries of Foreign Missions and of the Saint-Esprit were both inadequate. Thereupon the Bishop of Autun proposed that the students be sent to Bordeaux—"a great, rich, and populous city, near the ocean, to which there come, among other merchants, those of North America, with their ships laden with merchandise"—and that the archbishop of that See, an intimate friend of his, should place those students in one of the seminaries of that city. He believed that the fees would amount to about one thousand livres a year for each student. No doubt the Nuncio also reported to the Prime Minister and the Bishop of Autun "the favorable information that Mr. Franklin has given me of the merits and good reputation of Mr. Carrol . . . a subject who, if, in equality of merits, he should be selected as the vicar-apostolic to be sent to Maryland, would be very welcome to many members of Congress, and especially, to Mr. Franklin, who has recommended him to me with great solicitude," since in the letter which it was unanimously decided the Nuncio should write to la Luzerne, the French minister was to be requested to inquire about John Carroll's qualifications for the office.

Is it rash to see in la Luzerne's feelings regarding the pref-

erence of American Catholics for a native Bishop, the expression of which had been read at the beginning of the meeting, no less than in Franklin's warm recommendation of John Carroll, the motive of that decision? As shown by the Nuncio's detailed account, the main business of the meeting was to provide for the education of American missionaries. No allusion was made to Franklin's project of appointing a French bishop, or even a French *agent de liaison* between the Nuncio and the American minister. Nothing was heard of that project after the Bishop of Autun's "Observation" on Franklin's letter, January 4, 1784. The reasons which may have caused the American diplomat to change his mind are a matter of pure conjecture.

The Nuncio lost no time in drafting his Note and the letter to la Luzerne which had been decided upon. According to his report of May 17th, on the 11th of that month—"Tuesday of last week"—he informed Vergennes of the content of these documents, and the Prime Minister undertook to send them, with his ordinary despatch, to the Chevalier or, in the latter's absence (for he was about to return to Europe) to whosoever should be in charge of His Most Christian Majesty's affairs in the United States. The documents, with a recommendation from the Prime Minister, were to go on Tuesday of the third week of May, which that year fell on the 18th. From Paris the Nuncio went to Passy to see Mr. Franklin, who was then suffering from an attack of gravel, and he informed the American minister of all that had transpired at the meeting of May 3rd, and of all he had written to la Luzerne. He thanked the Doctor for his obliging kindness in informing Congress and requested his continued good offices for the success of the undertaking. Franklin expressed his satisfaction and his pleasure, and assured the Nuncio that his Republic would be most grateful to have two or three of its subjects students of the College of the Propaganda.

The Archives of the Propaganda and the Archives du Min-

istère des Affaires Etrangères have yielded a crop of documents permitting us to form a very clear idea of the spirit in which all those who had attended the meeting of May 3rd interpreted their duty. The first is a covering letter dated May 12, 1784, from the Nuncio to Vergennes,⁷ requesting the Prime Minister to transmit to la Luzerne: a letter to the Chevalier, a note to the French minister in the United States, and a letter for one of the oldest missionaries in the United States. All bear the same date, May 12, 1784.

The letter to la Luzerne⁸ stresses the fact that "by order of my Court [the Roman Court]" the Nuncio is in agreement with the Minister of His Most Christian Majesty and with the Minister of the United States. The Prelate explains why he addresses himself "only to your [la Luzerne's] prudence" on the important and delicate point of the selection of the future American bishop or vicar apostolic; he requests the French minister to give him information concerning "Mr. Carrol of Maryland," and to let him know whether he considers the Jesuit missionary "worthy to be named bishop *in partibus* and vicar-apostolic." This part of the Nuncio's letter explains how, the following August, Barbé-Marbois, in answering the communication addressed to his predecessor, came to express the view that the choice should not fall upon a French ecclesiastic, and recommended the same John Carroll as eligible for the episcopal see.

The note to the Chevalier de la Luzerne⁹ was written by the Nuncio "in the name of the Cardinal Prefect," in order "that two months of time should not be lost." It begins with a history of the negotiations which the Nuncio had undertaken by order of the Propaganda. Upon the American diplomat's answer to the Nuncio's proposal of July 28, 1783, His Holiness instructed the Congregation to agree with Franklin and the French ministers upon the most desirable means of

⁷ Appendix No. 3, p. 80.

⁹ Appendix No. 5, p. 82.

⁸ Appendix No. 4, p. 80.

giving the North American missions the stability and development of which they might be capable. The Nuncio then asks for information upon four specific points: 1. Which of the missionaries now in North America would be most worthy to be created bishop *in partibus*; 2. a native would be preferred, but a Frenchman would be sent when the provinces lacked missionaries; 3. a numerical and geographical census of Catholics was needed; 4. whether there were Latin schools for the preparation of students to be sent to France or to Rome for their theological studies. The consistency of the policy inaugurated by the Propaganda and carried out by the Papal Nuncio, from the first Instructions given in January 1783 down to this stage of the negotiations, is thus clearly shown. Whenever the question of establishing a Catholic hierarchy in the United States arose, preference was invariably expressed for a native candidate and the appointment of an alien considered only in case a suitable native were not available; moreover, we have seen from the letter accompanying this note that the Nuncio's attention had already been called to John Carroll. These points must be borne in mind for a correct understanding of the letter Barbé-Marbois was to write, the following August, in reply to these communications from the Papal Nuncio.

The Nuncio's letter to "One of the missionaries living in America"¹⁰ asked for detailed information regarding the condition of American missions, the number of missionaries that would be necessary, the names of the provinces where there were Catholics, and whether there were among the natives "subjects available to receive holy orders and to exercise the functions of missionary." The answer to these questions would enable the Roman authorities to supplement, and possibly to check, information that would be supplied by the French minister. No mention is made, however, in that letter of the project of appointing a bishop. If this preference

¹⁰ Appendix No. 6, p. 84.

shown by the Papal representative for the French minister, on whose prudence he relies concerning the selection of the bishop vicar-apostolic, causes surprise, it should be remembered that, in matters of such importance, it is not the practice of the Holy See to deal directly with the clergy over whom authority is to be established.

All the documents entrusted to the Prime Minister were immediately forwarded to la Luzerne and, in the letter accompanying them, we find these significant words showing once more, how the French government had been brought into the affair: "I have conferred with the nuncio on the project of establishing a bishop or apostolic vicar in America, and you will find annexed a letter that this prelate writes to you on the subject. You will see that we have not sufficient information to form a proper resolution."¹¹

The packet addressed to la Luzerne was on its way to Lorient when the Nuncio, on May 17th, reported to the Cardinal Prefect all that occurred in these days which marked the culmination and the end of the Paris phase of the negotiation for the establishment of a Catholic hierarchy in the United States. This capital letter¹² reveals the Nuncio as faithfully informing the Prefect of every step he has taken to carry out the instructions received from Rome. In his eagerness to serve, he anticipates every wish of his superior; he informs him, for instance, as guidance for future correspondence with America, that a packet leaves the port of Lorient on Tuesday of every third week. He is anxious to win the approval of the Congregation and expresses the hope that it will be pleased with the result of the meeting of May 3rd, with the information written by la Luzerne regarding the attitude of Congress and of American Catholics, with the tenor of his own letters to the French minister, and, finally, with the favorable information received from Dr. Franklin

¹¹ Bancroft, p. 360.

¹² Appendix No. 7, p. 84.

of the merits of Mr. Carroll. He expects further orders to bring to its desired end the arrangement for the education of American seminarians, "in which the Count of Vergennes, seconding the pious and religious intentions of the Most Christian King, takes great interest." He also reports that he has kept Franklin informed of all that he has done and written.

In all this may be recognized the punctilious manner in which the agent of the Holy See dealt with the Roman Congregation and with the representatives of the two nations, French and American, and it shows, as do the previous documents, the disinterestedness of the French officials called upon to lend their assistance to the efforts the Nuncio made in the name and by order of the Holy See. If, as has been alleged, the plan of appointing a French bishop was a point of French policy, conceived by the Minister or some subordinate, it is hard to understand the lack of even a hint of that project in the whole of their correspondence.

Meanwhile the Cardinal Prefect was growing anxious to learn the result of the Paris meeting of May 3rd. On May 29th he wrote to the Nuncio:¹³

According to what Your Lordship was pleased to suggest in your letter of the 26th of April, the interview concerning the matter of the United States of the new American republic should have taken place several days ago, and therefore, I am awaiting the result of it with the interest that Your Lordship can imagine.

This letter crossed the Report directed May 17th to the Propaganda, and another letter, dated May 31st,¹⁴ in which the Nuncio assured the Prefect that the Comte de Vergennes "was pleased . . . to inform me of the solicitude with which he had seconded my action," in forwarding to the United States all the documents entrusted to him by the Nuncio.

¹³ Appendix No. 8, p. 87.

¹⁴ Appendix No. 9, p. 87.

These documents, when they reached America, were not received by the Chevalier de la Luzerne. About the time of the Paris meeting, the French minister was preparing to return to Europe, and we learn from a letter of Edward Bancroft to William Frazer of Philadelphia, under date of May 28th,¹⁵ that he had hired a ship to carry himself and his suite to Lorient, and expected to sail the 15th of June. The documents therefore came into the hands of Barbé-Marbois, who became Chargé d'Affaires upon the departure of La Luzerne, and in this quality made the inquiry requested. His report must have been made with the utmost care, judging from the fact that after writing a first and rather brief answer on August 15, 1784, he waited until March 27, 1785, to direct to the Comte de Vergennes a detailed survey of the situation.

The part of the first letter relative to the present issue¹⁶ states the sentiments of Catholic Americans. The Chargé d'Affaires finds them in general ill-disposed towards the Revolution, but is pleased to mention notable exceptions—one of them being Charles Carroll, with whom he has discussed the future of the Church in the United States. The whole Catholic body is anxious to have a bishop or vicar-apostolic, but it will be difficult to unite the faithful, who are widely dispersed and have no regular correspondence among themselves. Barbé-Marbois advises his government to use "a great deal of reserve" in engaging in the task of helping American Catholics and, above all, he believes that they "ought not to think of making the choice fall upon a French priest. The men of this country would make him experience all sorts of difficulties, and, respectable as might be his character and his conduct, there would be little probability of success in his apostolic labors." Charles Carroll is the one entrusted with the Nuncio's letter for the oldest missionary,

¹⁵ See Bancroft, p. 370.

¹⁶ Document No. 10, p. 88. Translated and quoted by Bancroft, p. 420.

and in answer to the Prelate's reference to John Carroll, Barbé-Marbois unhesitatingly writes:

This priest, whose personal acquaintance I do not possess, enjoys a good reputation; and I believe that it would be desirable that the chief of the churches of Pennsylvania and Maryland should concur with the intention of his Holiness to raise him to the episcopal see.

These two recommendations of the *Chargé d'Affaires*—the first, against the choice of a French bishop for the American Church, the second, in favor of John Carroll, show how seriously he took the directions given July 21, 1783, to the *Chevalier de la Luzerne*.¹⁷

When Barbé-Marbois wrote his fuller report of March 27, 1785,¹⁸ John Carroll had been appointed superior of the American missions and prefect apostolic. The *Chargé d'Affaires* expressed his satisfaction over this choice, than which, he said, none could have been more agreeable to Catholics of the United States, and he reiterated that he had no doubt Carroll's elevation to the episcopate would be welcomed by them. Nevertheless, he was as keenly conscious as they of the difficulties arising from "republican jealousy" against foreign dependence, even in matters of religion, and he therefore advised that the Holy See should proceed slowly, and relax, as much as possible, its authority in the United States. He counselled waiting until the Episcopalians, who were facing a similar problem, had paved the way for the introduction of the episcopate in the new republic; "then," said he, "it would appear odious to refuse the same advantage to the Catholics." But until then he believed it would be "for the advantage of religion not to precipitate anything." Regarding the method to be followed in the establishment of

¹⁷ "We are without the means of influencing the domestic arrangements of the United States; and, under all circumstances, we can but be tranquil spectators of the commotions that their constitution and their internal relations can meet with." See Chapter I, p. 19.

¹⁸ Appendix No. 11, p. 90.

the hierarchy, he considered the election of a bishop by the churches of the different States "more analogous to the spirit of the country," though he foresaw the difficulty of arranging such an election. His last recommendation was to "raise by degrees to the episcopacy a person who has been for some time known as the chief, and whose nomination, therefore, would astonish no one." He ends his report with a brief census of American Catholics according to the different States.

The wisdom of Barbé-Marbois' recommendations will appear when they are compared with the plea, made about the same time and along the same lines, by John Carroll himself. Once more the spirit of disinterested cooperation is shown by the Government of France and her representative in the United States. To dissipate persisting doubt as to whether any French official entertained the thought of using religion as a means to secure influence in the new republic, mention may here be made of a letter written January 2, 1786, to Vergennes by Otto, who had been appointed French minister to the United States.¹⁹ Far from wishing to establish French ecclesiastical domination in the United States, this diplomat opposed even the establishment of a French mission. "We are essentially interested," said he, "that there should not be in America a French church, since it would be one motive the more to excite the subjects of His Majesty to emigrate."

¹⁹ Appendix No. 12, p. 94.

APPENDICES TO CHAPTER III

1. La Luzerne to the Comte de Vergennes, January 31, 1784
2. The Cardinal Prefect to the Nuncio, April 7, 1784
3. The Nuncio to the Comte de Vergennes, May 12, 1784
4. (a) The Nuncio to la Luzerne, May 12, 1784 (translation)
(b) French original of above
5. The Nuncio, in the name of the Prefect, to la Luzerne, May 12, 1784
6. The Nuncio to a Missionary in America, May 12, 1784
7. The Nuncio to the Cardinal Prefect, May 17, 1784
8. The Cardinal Prefect to the Nuncio, May 29, 1784
9. The Nuncio to the Cardinal Prefect, May 31, 1784
10. (a) Barbé-Marbois to the Comte de Vergennes, August 15, 1784
(b) French original of above
11. (a) Barbé-Marbois to the Comte de Vergennes, March 27, 1785 (translation)
(b) French original of above
12. Otto to the Comte de Vergennes, January 2, 1786

1. LA LUZERNE TO THE COMTE DE VERGENNES.¹

Extract of the communication of the Chevalier de la Luzerne to the count of Vergennes under date of Annapolis, January 31st, 1784.

Monseigneur the Apostolic Nuncio has made some propositions in the name of His Holiness to Doctor Franklin in regard to the sending of a bishop, or vicar-apostolic, whom the Holy Father desires to place over the Roman Catholic churches of this continent. The congress has respectfully welcomed that overture; it has been unable, however, to take action in this matter, which is not of the competency of Congress. It is a matter that concerns the Catholics alone; and the delegates who have spoken to me on the subject have assured me that a Catholic bishop would be very well received in the state of Pennsylvania, and much more so in Maryland, where there are many Catholics, providing the prelate carefully avoided to assume any temporal jurisdiction or authority. The congress, in general, would be pleased at the residence of a prelate, who by conferring the sacrament of Holy Orders on the priests of these parts, would relieve them of the necessity of receiving it in London or in Quebec, as has been done in the past. Some of the delegates even believed that a Catholic bishop would not refuse to confer Holy Orders on the Anglican ministers of America, who, until now, have been obliged to procure their ordination at London; but this practice does not seem to me to be compatible with the profession that those who receive Holy Orders must make, or with the examination that they must undergo. The State Legislatures and Congress refrain from entangling themselves with religious matters.

P. S. The Catholics would not be pleased with a foreign Bishop, but they could very well choose the worthiest of their priests and present him to His Holiness for consecration, if he judges him qualified for the episcopal functions.²

¹ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-204.

² The letter is endorsed, "M. de R[ayneval]. Reçu le 23 avril." The postscript, hitherto unpublished, is taken from the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Vol. 27, p. 77, and in the original French reads as follows: "P. S. Les Catholiques ne verroient pas avec plaisir un Evêque étranger, mais ils pourront bien choisir le plus digne de leurs pretres et le presenter à S. S. pour qu'elle le fasse consacrer, si elle juge qu'il est en état de remplir les fonctions episcopales."

2. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.³

To Monseigneur Doria, Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris.

April 7th, 1784.

Your Lordship has acted very wisely, according to your habit, in postponing the matter of Monseigneur Miroudot to the much more important one concerning the establishment of missions in the united provinces of the new American republic. I shall await, with the concern that you may imagine, the result of the conference with Monseigneur the bishop of Autun and with the royal minister, count of Vergennes, hoping no less in the zealous activity of Your Lordship than in the merit of the cause, to see so important a matter happily concluded.

3. THE NUNCIO TO THE COMTE DE VERGENNES.⁴

Your Excellency;

May 12, 1784.

I have the honor of forwarding to Y[our] E[xcellency] a packet addressed to Mr. Chevalier de la Luzerne and containing the Letter I agreed with Y[our] Exc[ellency] to write to him, a Note and a letter for one of the oldest Missionaries established in the Provinces of the United States of America. Y[our] Exc[ellency] will find herewith a copy of these papers which you were so kind to ask from me. I have the honor to be with a perfect attachment, Sir, Your most humble and obedient servant.

J. Archbishop of Seleucia.

H. E. Comte de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Court.

4(a). THE NUNCIO TO LA LUZERNE.⁵

Copy of a letter of Monseigneur the Nuncio to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister plenipotentiary of His Most Christian Majesty to the United States of North America.

Paris, May 12th, 1784.

I have the honor of directing to you a note relating to the estab-

³ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

⁴ Endorsed, "Repl. May 25." Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Etats-Unis, Vol. 27, p. 344.

⁵ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-207.

lishment of the missions in the United States of North America. The count of Vergennes has assured me that Your Lordship will be pleased to procure for us the information to which the note refers and which may assist us to take desirable measures for the forwarding of a plan concerning which, by order of my court, I am in agreement with the ministers of His Most Christian Majesty and with the minister of the United States, on a subject of so much importance for the Catholic religion. I am happy to be able to address myself to Your Lordship in relation to this matter. Your discernment and zeal assure me of the precision of the information in question, for which my court will be thankful to you. I take the liberty of inclosing a letter that I have written by order of the Congregation of the Propaganda, which I beg you will deliver to one of the oldest missionaries of those provinces. You will see by it that I seek of such missionary some points of information, without, however, referring to the article concerning the bishop vicar-apostolic and to the selection of the latter. On so important and delicate a point, I have thought well to address myself only to your prudence, [I must add]⁶ that the ex-Jesuit, Mr. Carrol of Maryland, has been spoken of to me with eulogy. [I have been assured that he] was educated at St. Omer and, in 1776, was sent by the Congress to Canada, with Mr. Franklin and other commissioners. I hope that Your Lordship will be pleased to give me information concerning him, and will let me know whether you consider him worthy to be named bishop *in partibus* and vicar-apostolic.

4 (b). LE NONCE A LA LUZERNE.⁷

*Copie d'une lettre de M. le Nonce à M. le Chev. de La Luzerne,
Ministre Plénipotentiaire de Sa Majesté très Chrétienne en
Amérique.*

Paris ce 12 Mai 1784.

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer, M. une note relative à l'établissement des Missions dans les Etats unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale. M. le Cte de Vergennes m'a fait espérer que vous voudrez bien nous procurer les éclaircissemens détaillés dans cette note et qui pourront nous mettre en état de prendre les arrangemens convenables pour l'exécution du plan dont je suis convenu par ordre de ma Cour avec les Ministres de Sa Majesté très Chrétienne et celui

⁶ These words were omitted in the translation.

⁷ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Etats-Unis, Vol. 27, p. 342.

des Etats-Unis sur un objet aussi important pour la Religion Je me felicite M. de pouvoir m'adresser à vous dans cette affaire, vos lumières et votre zèle m'assurent de l'exactitude de ces renseignements dont ma Cour aura une véritable obligation, je prends la liberté de joindre ici une lettre que j'écris par ordre de la Congrégation de la Propagande et que je vous prie de vouloir bien faire remettre à l'un des plus anciens missionnaires qui se trouvent dans ces Provinces. Vous y verrez M. que je lui demande quelques éclaircissemens, sans entrer cependant avec lui dans l'article qui a rapport à l'Eveque et Vicaire apostolique et à son choix. j'ai cru devoir me rapporter uniquement à votre sagesse sur cet article aussi délicat qu'important, je dois ajouter que l'on m'a parlé avec éloge de M. Carrol de Maryland ci devant Jésuite. on m'a assuré qu'il a été élevé à St. Omer et que le Congrès l'a envoyé en 1776 dans le Canada avec M. Franklin et les autres commissaires.

J'espère que vous voudrez bien me donner votre avis sur ce sujet, et me dire si vous le jugés digne d'être nommé Eveque in partibus et Vicaire Apostolique.

J'ai l'honneur &c, &c.

5. THE NUNCIO IN THE NAME OF THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO LA LUZERNE.⁸

Copy of the note sent to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, May 12th, 1784.

Before the American revolution, the Catholics and missionaries of those states, in what concerns religion, were under the vigilance and direction of the Vicar-Apostolic residing in London. That revolution having separated the interests of the United States from those of England, and having entirely changed the government of those States, the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda has seen the necessity of taking other measures for the government of these missions: whence, Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleucia, apostolic nuncio at Paris, was charged by this Congregation to make on that subject to the Congress of the United States some propositions, not less useful to religion and to the spiritual assistance of the Catholics than acceptable to the government of those States.

Monseigneur the Nuncio mentioned the matter to Mr. Franklin, who, however, answered that, having seriously reflected on it, he

⁸ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-206.

considered it absolutely useless to refer the question to the congress, which, by its constitutions and faculties, could not, and should not, entangle itself in ecclesiastical affairs, and consequently, that it was in the power of the Court of Rome to take all measures that might be of advantage to the Catholics in America, without offending the constitutions. After receiving this answer, the Congregation, by order of His Holiness, instructed Monseigneur the Nuncio to agree with the ministers of His Most Christian Majesty, and with the minister of the United States, upon the most desirable means of giving to the missions of North America the stability and development of which they might be capable.

His Most Christian Majesty having wished, on such an occasion, to give a new proof of his piety and of the interest that he takes in the preservation and extension of the Catholic religion in all parts of the world, found no difficulty in agreeing to a plan that is no less useful to the Catholics of the United States than to the government of those provinces; but, to establish a stable condition of things, and to forestall all the objections and difficulties that might present themselves in its realization, it is necessary to have certain information that may make it possible to compass that object.

1st. To have exact knowledge of the conduct and capacity of the ecclesiastics and missionaries who are in the various provinces of North America; which one of them would be the most worthy, and the most acceptable to the assembly of those provinces, to be created bishop *in partibus* and invested with the character of vicar-apostolic, considering that it will be desirable to fix the residence in that province in which there is the greatest number of Catholics.

2d. If there be among those ecclesiastics a native of the country who may be among the most worthy, in equality of merits he would be preferred to any of another nationality; and whenever the provinces should be in lack of missionaries, a Frenchman will be sent to establish himself there, residing in the province suggested above.

3d. To know the number of the ecclesiastics and missionaries, as, also, that of the Catholics in the different provinces, and their area, assuming that the greater number of them is to be found in Pennsylvania and in Maryland. It would be well, however, to know the same in regard to the other provinces.

4th. To know if there be schools in those provinces, where the Latin language may be learnt, and where those youths who wish to prepare for the ecclesiastical state may have studied the humanities

before repairing to France or to Rome for the study of philosophy and of theology.

6. THE NUNCIO TO A MISSIONARY IN AMERICA.⁹

Copy of a letter of Mgr. the Nuncio to one of the Missionaries living in America, dated May 12th, 1784.

The interests of religion requiring that new information be had of the missions that are established in the United States of North America, the Congregation of the Propaganda has ordered me to ask you for detailed information of the present condition of those missions. I beg of you to let me know, at the same time, what number of missionaries would be necessary for the service of those stations and to secure spiritual assistance to the Catholic subjects of the United States; which are the provinces where there are Catholics, and where the greatest number of Catholics are to be found; and lastly, whether there be, among the natives of that country, subjects available to receive holy orders and to exercise the functions of missionary. I will be very thankful to you, personally, for the precision and celerity with which you may be kind enough to procure and to forward this information for me.

I have the honor, etc., etc.

7. THE NUNCIO TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT.¹⁰

As I announced to Your Eminence in my respectful communication of the 26th of April, the meeting concerning the very important matter of the establishment of the missions in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America took place at Versailles, on the 3d of the present month, between the count of Vergennes, Monseigneur the bishop of Autun, and myself. The count of Vergennes read an extract from a dispatch of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister plenipotentiary of the Most Christian King near that republic, under date of Annapolis, January 31st, 1784, of which, afterwards, he was kind enough to give me a copy that I have the honor of transmitting to Your Eminence, herewith, in order that you may see by it that, although Mr. Franklin expressed the belief that it was absolutely useless to send to the con-

⁹ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 207-211.

gress the note that I addressed to him, he, nevertheless, forwarded it to that body, while the latter received well and with respect the proposal of the Holy Father, made by me, to send a bishop or a vicar-apostolic, and that a bishop would be very well received in the state of Pennsylvania and especially so, in the state of Maryland, where there is the greatest number of Catholics; but that the congress has been unable to take cognizance of this matter, which is in no way of that body's competency.

At the meeting, I conveyed all that Your Eminence was pleased to suggest to me in your letter of the 27th of September, 1783, and called attention to the fact that the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, and I, were uninformed of the number of Catholics in the United States of the American republic, and that, consequently, it was not possible to fix that of the missionaries and of the students, but, that it was believed that eight missionaries, for the present, would be sufficient, and that eight or ten students might be educated in France, and two or three, at the college of Propaganda, which will see to the support, not only of these two or three students, but, also, of the bishop *in partibus* vicar-apostolic to be sent to Maryland and it was unanimously agreed that, in view of the declaration of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, I, without loss of time, should forward to him a note, together with a letter of mine, to him, and another letter from me to one of the missionaries living in America, of the general tenor of the enclosed copies. I informed the count of Vergennes of the contents of this note and letters on Tuesday of last week, in order to be in accordance with that royal minister, who willingly undertook to recommend and to send them with his dispatches to the Chevalier, or, in the absence of the latter, who is about to return to Europe, to whoever is in charge of His Most Christian Majesty's affairs; they go by the packet, which leaves l'Orient for North America on Tuesday of the third week of each month, and which goes and returns in the course of three months; this may serve that Sacred Congregation as guidance, when it may have occasion to send a letter to those parts. There was discussed the question of what would be the most adequate and desirable place for the education of the students who, when duly prepared, are to go to those missions. It was shown that, in the seminaries of Paris, only philosophy, canon and civil law, and theology are taught, not grammar, the humanities, mathematics, and rhetoric, for which latter studies there are colleges here, in which the fees are certainly higher than in those of the provinces, and that the Seminary for

Foreign Missions and that of Saint Esprit, in this capital, would be inadequate, for the same reasons, for those students who were not sufficiently well grounded in the Latin language to begin at once the study of philosophy, law, and theology. Monseigneur the bishop of Autun therefore proposed that the students who may be thought necessary, after receiving the answers from America, could be sent to Bordeaux, which, as Your Eminence is well aware, is a great, rich, and populous city, near the ocean, to which there come, among other merchants, those of North America, with their ships, laden with merchandise, and the archbishop of that see, an intimate friend of Monseigneur d'Autun, could place those students in one of the seminaries of that city, the latter prelate believing that the fees would amount to about one thousand lire, for each student, per year. I hope that His Holiness and, also, the Sacred Congregation will be pleased, not only with what transpired at the meeting to which I refer, and with what was written by the Chevalier de la Luzerne, but, also, with all that I have said in the letters and not already mentioned, since this is related with the faculties that were communicated to me by the above-mentioned letter of Your Eminence of the 27th of September, 1783, and with the favorable information that Mr. Franklin has given me of the merits and good reputation of Mr. Carrol, an ex-Jesuit of the state of Maryland, who was sent by the congress to Canada, in 1776, with Mr. Franklin and the other commissioners, a subject who, if, in equality of merits, he should be selected as the vicar-apostolic to be sent to Maryland, would be very welcome to many members of Congress, and especially, to Mr. Franklin, who has recommended him to me with great solicitude. When Your Eminence shall have seen the exposition that I have made in the name of the Sacred Congregation, without incurring any obligation, and without informing that Congregation beforehand, in order that two months of time should not be lost, I will expect the further orders that I should follow, to bring to its desired end the present matter, in which the Count of Vergennes, seconding the pious and religious intentions of the Most Christian King, takes the greatest interest. I will not omit to inform Your Eminence that, as Mr. Franklin is suffering from the gravel, his nephew goes now, in his stead, to Versailles, and as, on that account, I was unable to find him there, last Tuesday, I went to see him at his house in Passy, and I informed him of all that had transpired at the above meeting, as well as of what I had written to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, while I thanked him for the obliging

kindness of informing the congress, and asked him to use his good offices. He showed himself to be penetrated with the utmost gratitude, and to be pleased, and he assured me that his republic will be most grateful that two or three of its subjects become students in the college of Propaganda at Rome, being assured that the sciences are taught there in the highest degree of perfection, and that, in this way, there would be capable subjects for the good of religion and of the state. And finally, awaiting the further venerated commands of Your Eminence, I subscribe myself, with the most respectful homage,

Of Your Eminence, the Very Humble, Devoted, and Grateful Servant,

G. Archbishop of Seleucia.

Paris, May 17th, 1784.

8. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.¹¹

To Mgr. the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris.

May 29th, 1784.

According to what Your Lordship was pleased to suggest in your letter of the 26th of April, the interview concerning the matter of the United States of the new American republic should have taken place several days ago, and therefore, I am awaiting the result of it with the interest that Your Lordship can imagine.

9. THE NUNCIO TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT.¹²

I having sent to the count of Vergennes, with a letter, written on the 12th of May, the letters that I wrote to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister plenipotentiary of the Most Christian King near the states of the new American republic and to One of the missionaries in that country, respectively, and the note, copies of which I sent to Your Eminence on the 18th of the present month, the above named royal minister was pleased to acknowledge receipt of them, and to inform me of the solicitude with which he had seconded my action, by a letter of which I enclose a copy. I forward it to Your Eminence, with the assurance that you will be glad to read it and to preserve it with the other papers that concern the establishment of the missions in the above republic. And pene-

¹¹ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

trated with the most respectful homage, while I await the honor of your valued commands, I remain ever

Of Your Eminence, the Very Humble, Devoted, and Grateful Servant,

G. Archbishop of *Seleucia*.

Paris, May 31st, 1784.

10 (a). BARBÉ-MARBOIS TO THE COMTE DE
VERGENNES.¹³

Philadelphia, August 15, 1784.

Monseigneur,

I have received Despatch No. 2 which you addressed to the Chevalier de la Luzerne. It was delivered to me by the Marquis de la Fayette just when I was recovering from an acute fever, which is common enough in this country, but attacked me for the first time in the five years of my residence here. For more than ten days it prevented me from attending to business and has left me extremely weak.

Next November, Monseigneur, I shall inform Congress of the permission His Majesty graciously grants to the United States ships to stop over at Ile-de-France. This favor, of which I have notified the traders in advance, is very important for them, and will probably attract to our Islands part of that commerce which was beginning to take the direction of the Cape of Good Hope.

¹⁴ The Catholics, always directed by the Jesuits in this country, have been ill-disposed to the revolution; they are not much better disposed toward us. But several persons of consideration have not the same prejudices. One of them, Mr. Carroll, the largest capitalist and the richest landholder in Maryland, has even [often] spoken to me of the desire of the whole congregation to be directed by a bishop or apostolic vicar. He is a pious, wise, and prudent man, who feels the necessity of uniting under one chief the individuals of our religion scattered through Maryland and Pennsyl-

¹³ The first part of this letter, hitherto unpublished, is found in the Doysié Transcripts of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress: *Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Etats-Unis*, Vol. 28, folios 140-143. The remainder of the letter was in cipher and is quoted from Bancroft's translation, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 378-379.

¹⁴ The cipher begins here; the words in brackets are our corrections.

vania; but he foresees great difficulties on account of their dispersion, and because there has never been a particular and regular correspondence between the Catholics of the two states. If we take any part in this matter it ought to be with a great deal of reserve; and I, above all things, believe that we ought not to think of making the choice fall upon a French priest. The men of this country would make him prove [experience] all sorts of difficulties, and, respectable as might be his character and his conduct, there would be little probability of success in his apostolic labors. I am sending to Mr. Carroll the letter of the nuncio for the oldest missionary, and I have the honor to address to you a copy of that which I wrote to him at the same time. This prelate makes mention in his letter to M. de la Luzerne of the Abbé Carroll, one of the relations of him of whom I spoke to you. This priest, whose personal acquaintance I do not possess, enjoys a good reputation; and I believe that it would be desirable that the chief of the churches of Pennsylvania and Maryland should concur with the intention of his Holiness to raise him to the episcopal see.

10 (b). BARBÉ-MARBOIS AU COMTE DE
VERGENNES.¹⁵

Philadelphie le 15 août 1784.

Monseigneur,

J'ai reçu la Dépêche No. 2 que vous avés écrite à Mr. le Chever de la Luzerne. Elle m'a été remise par Mr. le Marquis de la Fayette au moment ou je sortois d'une fièvre aigue asses commune dans ce pais-ci, mais qui m'a attaqué pour la première fois depuis cinq ans que j'y réside, elle m'a empêché pendant plus de dix jours de m'occuper d'affaires et m'a laissé une faiblesse extrême.

Je feray part au Congrès, Monseigneur, au mois de Novembre prochain de la permission que Sa Majesté veut bien accorder aux navires des Etats-Unis de relacher à l'Isle de France. Cette faveur que j'ai annoncée d'avance aux commerçans leur est très importante, et elle attirera probablement vers nos Isles une partie de ce commerce qui commençoit a se diriger ver le Cap de Bonne espérance.

¹⁵ Rayneval's endorsement shows that this letter was received September 24th. Doysié Transcripts, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress: Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Etats-Unis, Vol. 28, folios 140-143.

¹⁶ Les Catholiques toujours dirigés par les Jésuites dans ce pais-ci, Msgr, ont été en général mal disposés pour la révolution. Ils ne le sont pas mieux pour nous, mais plusieurs particuliers considérables n'ont pas les mêmes préjugés. M. Caroll l'un d'eux le plus grand capitaliste et le plus grand Fermier du Maryland m'a souvent parlé du désir que toute la congrégation avoit d'être dirigée par un évêque ou un vicaire apostolique; c'est un homme pieux, discret et prudent qui sent la nécessité de réunir sous un chef les individus épars de notre religion dans le Maryland et la Pennsylvanie; mais il prévoit de grandes difficultés soit à cause de leur dispersion; soit parce qu'il n'y a jamais eû de correspondance régulière entre les Catholiques des deux Etats. Si nous prenons quelque part à cette affaire, ce doit être avec beaucoup de réserve; et je crois surtout que nous ne devons pas songer à faire tomber le choix sur un prêtre français. Ceux de ce pais-ci lui feroient éprouver toute sorte de difficultés, et quelque respectable que fût son caractère et sa conduite, il auroit peu d'apparence de succès dans ses travaux apostoliques. J'adresse à Mr. Caroll la lettre de Msgr le Nonce pour le plus ancien missionnaire et j'ai l'honneur de vous adresser copie de celle que je lui écris en même temps. Ce Prélat fait mention dans sa lettre à Mr le Chever de la Luzerne de M. l'abbé Caroll, l'un des parents de celui dont je viens d'avoir l'honneur de vous parler. ce Prêtre que je ne connais personnellement, jouit d'une bonne réputation et je crois qu'il seroit à désirer que le chef des Eglises de Pensylvanie et du Maryland pût concourir avec les intentions de sa Sté pour l'élever au siège épiscopal.

Je suis, etc.

DE MARBOIS

11 (a). BARBÉ-MARBOIS TO THE COMTE DE
VERGENNES.¹⁷

Philadelphia, March 27, 1785.

The enclosed packet for the prince Doria Pamphili, has been addressed to me, and particularly recommended by Mr. Carroll, the superior of the Missions. The holy see could not make a choice more agreeable to Catholics of the United States; and if circumstances permit his elevation to the episcopacy, I doubt not their general satisfaction. But all Catholics whose zeal is moderated by prudence desire that this measure should not be taken until the people shall

¹⁶ D'ici jusqu'à la fin de la lettre en chiffre.

¹⁷ Bancroft, pp. 420-421. The words in brackets are our corrections.

have been sufficiently prepared for it. Nothing would be more easy for the ill-disposed than to spread an alarm touching the spiritual and temporal authority of the pope. Catholics have had seats in congress, and several members of the assembly of Maryland in like manner profess our religion; but it is only on the supposition that they are not dependent on any foreign power. The articles of the confederation do not permit any one of the officers of the United States to receive gifts, titles, or employments of any kind whatever from a king, prince, or foreign power. Republican jealousy would infallibly apply this prohibition to ecclesiastical offices; and without particular address in the management of this affair, religion would lose more than it would gain by the nomination of a bishop. Thus the holy see is sure to extend its progress in relaxing its jurisdiction as much as the good of the faith can permit; and a different practice would not fail to stop its own propagation and to augment the other sects on which the civil honors and authorities will [would] devolve to the exclusion of the Catholics. The Anglicans themselves will prepare the bill [people] for the introduction of the episcopate. They have never wished to receive a bishop before the revolution; but today they feel the difficulty of having their ministers ordained in England. The laws accord them the free exercise of their religion, and consequently everything which is necessary to this free exercise. They infer from it they have the right to have bishops; and they probably will soon have them. Then, my lord, it will [would] appear odious to refuse the same advantage to the Catholics; but till then, I believe it is for the advantage of religion not to precipitate anything. His Holiness could nevertheless nominate probably [in advance] an apostolic vicar; and, when circumstances should be entirely favorable, raise him to the episcopacy. I cannot say if the choice ought to emanate purely and simply from the holy father, or if the churches of the different states ought to propose a candidate. This last form is undoubtedly [the] most analogous to the spirit of this [these] people. But the Catholics are not here united under a common chief; those of one state have not [any] relation with those of another, and I do not see how they could have one at [bring about] an election. It is one motive the more to raise by degrees to the episcopacy a person who has been for some time [known as] the chief, and whose nomination, therefore, would astonish no one. The first choice once made, it will be less difficult to organize our church than [under] actual conditions.

The number of Catholics in the United States merits, in fact, the

attention the holy see gives to it. There are in [the States of] New England about 600; [of] New York and New Jersey 1700; [of] Pennsylvania and Delaware, 7,700; [of] Maryland, freemen 12,000, slaves, 8,000-20,000; in the states of the South, about 2,500; at the Illinois, Kaskaskia, and several other establishments purely French, on the Mississippi, 12,000; total, 44,500.

The Catholics of New York have [had] no priest, but an Irish almoner from [Chaplain for] the ships of his Majesty, who has no permission to be absent from his convent. He has made a supposititious one which I have recognized to be false; yet he has obtained powers [faculties] from Mr. Carroll, who was [is] not informed of these circumstances. For the rest, the establishment of the chapel of the legation of New York gives to the Catholics of this city all the (spiritual) resources that they can [have] desire[d].

11 (b). BARBÉ-MARBOIS AU COMTE DE
VERGENNES.¹⁸

à Philadelphie le 27 mars 1785

Monseigneur,

Le paquet ci-joint pour Mr. le Prince Doria Pamphili, m'a été adressé et particulièrement recommandé par Mr. Carroll, supérieur général des missions.

Le St. Siège ne pouvoit faire un choix plus agréable aux Catholiques des Etats-Unis; et si les circonstances permettent de l'élever à l'épiscopat je ne doute pas qu'ils n'en ayent une satisfaction générale. Mais tous les Catholiques dont le zèle est modéré par la prudence, désirent que cette mesure ne soit prise qu'après que les peuples y auront été suffisamment préparés; rien ne seroit plus facile à des mal-intentionnés, que de repandre l'allarme touchant l'autorité spirituelle ou temporelle du pape. Quelques Catholiques ont siégé dans le Congrès et plusieurs membres de l'assemblée du Maryland professent également notre religion; mais ce n'est que dans la supposition qu'ils ne sont pas dans la dépendance d'aucune puissance étrangère. les articles de la confédération portent même qu'il ne sera jamais permis à aucun des officiers des Etats-Unis de recevoir des dons, titres ou emplois de quelque espèce qu'ils soient, d'un Roi, prince, ou d'une puissance étrangère. la jalousie républicaine appliqueroit in-

¹⁸ Doysié Transcripts, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress: Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Etats-Unis, Vol. 29, folios 123-125.

faiblement cette prohibition même aux offices ecclésiastiques; et à moins d'une adresse particulière dans le manquement de cette affaire, la religion perdrait plus qu'elle ne gagnerait à la nomination d'un évêque. Ainsi le St. Siège est sûr d'en étendre les progrès en relâchant sa juridiction autant que le bien de la foi peut le permettre; et une pratique différente ne manqueroit pas d'en arrêter la propagation et d'augmenter les autres sectes auxquelles les honneurs et l'autorité civile seroient dévolus à l'exclusion des Catholiques; au reste, les anglicans eux-mêmes prépareroient le peuple à l'introduction de l'épiscopat; ils n'ont jamais voulu recevoir d'évêque avant la révolution; mais aujourd'hui ils sentent tous les inconvéniens de faire ordonner leur ministres en Angleterre, les lois leur accordent le libre exercice de leur religion, et par conséquent tout ce qui est nécessaire à ce libre exercice; ils en concluent qu'ils ont le droit d'avoir des évêques, et ils en auront probablement bientôt. Alors, Monseigneur, il paroîtroit odieux de refuser le même avantage aux Catholiques. Mais jusque là je crois qu'il est de l'avantage même de la religion de ne rien précipiter. Sa Sainteté pourroit néanmoins nommer préalablement un vicaire apostolique et quand les circonstances seroient entièrement favorables, l'élever à l'épiscopat. Je ne puis dire si le choix doit émaner purement et simplement du St. Père ou si les églises des différens états doivent proposer un sujet; cette dernière forme est sans doute la plus analogue à l'esprit de ces peuples-ci; mais les Catholiques n'y sont pas réunis sous un chef commun: ceux d'un état n'ont aucune relation avec ceux d'un autre; et je ne vois nullement comment on pourroit parvenir à une élection. C'est un motif de plus pour élever par degrés à l'épiscopat un sujet qui soit depuis quelque tems connu comme le chef, et dont la nomination n'étonne personne. Ce premier choix une fois fait, il sera moins difficile d'organiser notre église que dans l'état actuel.

Le nombre des Catholiques dans les Etats-Unis mérite en effet l'attention que le St. Siège leur donne. Il y a dans les Etats de la

Nouvelle-Angleterre environ.....	600
New-York et N. Jersy.....	1700
Pennsylvanie et Delaware.....	7700
en Maryland: hommes libres.....	12000
: esclaves	8000
dans les etats du Sud à peu prs.....	2500
aux Illinois a Kaskaskia sur le Mississipi.....	12000
	44500

Les Catholiques de New-York n'avoient pour Prêtre qu'un Irlandois aumonier des Vaisseaux de Sa Majesté qui n'a point la permission d'être absent de son couvent et qui en a supposé une que j'ai reconnue fausse. Il a cependant obtenu des pouvoirs de Mr. Carroll qui n'est pas informé de ces circonstances. Au reste l'établissement de la chapelle de la légation à New-York donne aux Catholiques de cette ville toutes les ressources spirituelles qu'ils ont pu désirer.

Je suis etc.

DE MARBOIS

12. OTTO TO VERGENNES.¹⁹

New York, 2 Jan., 1786.

All Christian sects enjoy in America an entire liberty. The Jews have the exercise of their religion only; but they make efforts to enter into the legislative assemblies. It would be very remarkable if this people, after having suffered the contempt of all ages and nations, should succeed in America in taking part in the affairs of government. But this revolution is not yet ripe; and although, according to the terms of several of the constitutions, it is enough to recognise a God to enter the assembly, prejudices are still too strong to enable the Jews to enjoy the privileges accorded to all their fellow-citizens. But whatever may be the tolerance of the different states in the United States, religious zeal awakens so soon as one sect dares to take the lead over another. The Presbyterians of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts have not yet been reconciled to the Anglicans; and when a preacher announces some exaggerated pretensions, it is enough to inflame the opposite party. The small number of Catholics has not yet given umbrage; but it is believed here, as in England, that this religion is contrary to political liberty; and, if it is augmented by the aid of any foreign power, they will not fail to oppose its increase with vivacity. Moreover, we are essentially interested that there should not be in America a French church, since it would be one motive the more to excite the subjects of his Majesty to emigrate. Mr. de la Valinière assembles the French who are in his house. He preaches regularly to them every Sunday, and he assured me that he is persuaded that, if there were a French church here, it would, without doubt, attract a great number of his countrymen.

¹⁹ Bancroft, p. 476.

CHAPTER FOUR

ROMAN DECISION, JUNE 1784

At the very time the negotiations in Paris for the reorganization of the American Church were taking a turn which augured a happy conclusion of the entire affair, Rome caused the abandonment of the portion of it pertaining to the appointment of a superior; the problem of providing for and training American missionaries, which had to an even greater degree engaged the attention of the Nuncio and the Bishop of Autun, was not, however, to be dropped.

Before the report of the meeting of May 3, 1784 had reached Rome, and Barbé-Marbois had received the documents analyzed in the preceding chapter, a letter dated June 9th from the Prefect advised the Nuncio that "some letters were received by this Congregation from the missionaries of Maryland and Pennsylvania, informing it of the present state of the Christian establishment of those parts, and requesting that Mr. Lowis [sic] be put in charge of it, he being the same to whom the Vicar-Apostolic of London had given that charge." These, it will be remembered, were the two petitions which had been directed to Rome after the second meeting at Whitmarsh in November 1783. The Cardinal Prefect, in answer to the Nuncio's request for information regarding the Catholic situation in America, forwarded to him the memorandum respecting the missions.¹ He likewise advised him of the appointment of the Reverend John Carroll as superior of the Mission in the thirteen United States of North America, with the faculty of administering the sacrament of Confirmation in those provinces during his superiorship.

What motives led the Congregation to take this rather sudden decision before receiving the Nuncio's report, for which the Prefect had written only a few days prior (May

¹ Appendix No. 1, p. 113.

29th) that he was "waiting with interest"? Who induced the Roman authorities to select John Carroll, whose name Dr. Franklin had recommended to the Nuncio "with great solicitude"? Various conjectures have been offered in answer to these questions. Writing to John Carroll three months later (September 2nd) ² Charles Plowden gave the credit to their mutual friend, Father Thorpe:

Our friend Thorpe's memorial, delivered to the pope along with your petition, by Cardinal Borromeo, convinced the Propaganda that the introduction of an alien would overthrow the mission.

But Father Thorpe made no such claim for his intervention. In a letter to Carroll dated June 9, 1784, informing him of his appointment as superior of the missions, he said: ³

When the nuncio, M. Doria, at Paris, applied to Mr. Franklin, the old gentleman remembered you; he had his memory refreshed before, though you had modestly put your own name in the last place of the list.

Then again, about a year later, July 5, 1785, he wrote:

The affair was certainly in agitation before the petition made in the name of the five missionaries was here presented. I do not know by what means it was introduced.

Perhaps it is simpler to take the Prefect's own account of the affair.⁴ When he wrote to the Paris Nuncio, June 9th, the very day Carroll's nomination was approved by the Pope, and forwarded to him copies of all the documents relative to the matter, he stated the reasons which had prompted the choice of Mr. Carroll. He had noticed that on the petition of the American missionaries Carroll's name appeared in the last place, and stated to the Nuncio: "This fact shows that Carroll had not cooperated with the earnest solicitation of Mr. Franklin in his behalf, and consequently, it has

² Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 376.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

⁴ Appendix No. 2, p. 114.

helped to give him preference over Lowis, who, moreover, being 64 years of age, as the letters in question show, would seem to deserve rest. For the establishment of a new system of missions, not only experience is necessary, but, also, the age of activity, to work and to do. We are not informed of the age of Carroll [he was then forty-nine], but it may be assumed to be a much more vigorous one than that of Lowis, since he is named last in the petition." Although it is not possible, in the light of available documents, to ascertain when and through what channels Franklin conveyed to the Holy See an "earnest solicitation" in behalf of John Carroll, it must be inferred from the Cardinal's words that the American minister actually intervened, and the same words may be considered as proof that Father Thorpe was right in saying the affair had been "in agitation" before the petition of the American clergy reached Rome.

Although the decree declaring "the Rev. John Carroll, secular priest, Superior of the missions in the thirteen United States of North America, with the authority to exercise the functions which regard the government of the missions," was not issued until the "9th day of June," three days earlier, June 6th, the Secretary of the Propaganda was received in audience by Pope Pius VI, and on the latter's report "the Holy Father granted to the Rev. John Carroll, Superior of the Mission in the thirteen United States of North America, the faculty of administering the sacrament of Confirmation in the same provinces during his superiority."

On the same 9th of June Cardinal Antonelli, who issued the decree, informed Carroll of this decision in a letter⁵ of which a few extracts may be given as they throw light on the Prefect's intentions and his manner of dealing with the new superior. The Sovereign Pontiff and the Congregation, he says, "have thought it extremely proper to designate a pastor

⁵ Appendix No. 3, p. 117.

who should, permanently and independently of any ecclesiastical power, except the same Sacred Congregation, attend to the spiritual necessities of the Catholic flock." On September 27, 1783, in answer to Franklin's proposal contained in the Note on American Missions—that the Court of Rome, in concert with the minister of the United States, might choose a French ecclesiastic, who, residing in France, would regulate the spiritual affairs of American Catholics—the Cardinal had insisted that the Nuncio in France should have the supervision of these American missions. Here he emphasized that the only ecclesiastical power on which the superior of these missions would depend would be the Congregation of Propaganda.

Continuing his account, the Prefect states the reasons which led the Congregation to choose Carroll in preference to Father Lewis:

You have given conspicuous proofs of piety and zeal, and it is known that your appointment will please and gratify many members of that republic, and especially Mr. Franklin, the eminent individual who represents the same republic at the court of the Most Christian King.

Moreover, "these arrangements are meant to be only temporary. For it is the intention of his Holiness soon to charge a Vicar-Apostolic, invested with the title and character of bishop, with the care of those states, that he may attend to ordination and other episcopal functions." Carroll was therefore requested to forward to Rome as soon as possible "a correct report, stating carefully the number of Catholics in each state; what is their condition, their piety and what abuses exist; also how many missionary priests labor now in that vineyard of the Lord; what are their qualifications, their zeal, their mode of support. For, though the Sacred Congregation wish not to meddle with temporal things, it is important for the establishment of laborers, that we should know what are the ecclesiastical revenues, if any there are,

and it is believed there are some." Without mentioning the plans, still in abeyance in Paris, for the education of American seminarians in France, the Prefect ends his letter by requesting the new superior to choose two youths to be educated at the expense of the Congregation in the Urban College.

The Prefect's letter to John Carroll was transmitted on the same day to the Paris Nuncio,⁶ who was charged to forward it through the good offices of the French officials in Paris and the United States, to Carroll, with the other documents. After calling the Nuncio's attention to the promptness with which "His Holiness and this Sacred Congregation have seconded the desire shown by Mr. Franklin, as well as by many members of the congress, that said Carroll be placed at the head of the missions . . . of the United States of North America, thus withdrawing them from the dependency upon the Vicar-Apostolic of London," the Prefect sums up the results of the negotiations the Nuncio had carried on in his name: the establishment of a bishop or vicar-apostolic, an offer of scholarships, and provisions for a more extensive education of evangelical workers through French cooperation. He takes this occasion to commend "the diligence and zeal of your Lordship in the management of all this important matter," and finally, directions for future action being in order, and in view of the fact that "the congress sees well that Church affairs are not of its competency," he informs the Nuncio that it has been decided henceforth to deal with this matter directly with American missionaries, and, for the present, with Mr. Carroll who has been constituted their head. Exception is made, however, in regard to the young men who, it is hoped, will be received in the seminaries of Bordeaux, and therefore, on this subject the Nuncio will continue to negotiate with the Bishop of Autun or with whosoever else can assist to the desired end.

⁶ Appendix No. 2, p. 114.

This letter of the Cardinal Prefect furnishes new evidence of the consistency of the Roman policy. The Holy See deals only with constituted authorities, and no trace has been found of direct communication with American missionaries before the final severing of their religious dependence on London; but no sooner was an authority established in the person of John Carroll, than the Roman authorities put aside their intermediary, namely the French minister in the United States, even though they continued for a while to use his good offices to transmit whatever documents they wished conveyed to the American missionaries. The Prefect's direction to the Nuncio not to fail to convey the satisfaction of the Holy Father to the Comte de Vergennes, Mr. Franklin and "the Bishop of Autun, when the conclusion of the question of scholarships at Bordeaux will have been reached," reveals once more the rôle that the French officials had been called to play in the whole affair—a rôle of benevolent co-operation in a program conceived at Rome and in which the Paris Nuncio had succeeded in interesting the French Government and those among the French bishops without whose assistance it could not have been realized. In connection with this letter one should read the notice sent June 19th⁷ by the same Cardinal Prefect to the Vicar-Apostolic of London informing him of the cessation of his jurisdiction over American Catholics. The first motive given for such a decision on the part of the Holy See is that "the Catholics inhabiting the thirteen United States of America have been forbidden by the magistrates of that Republic to have any longer as their Superiors Vicars-Apostolic dwelling in foreign countries."

June 29th, upon receipt of the Prefect's letter,⁸ the Nuncio called on the Prime Minister and, without communicating to him "the contents of the respected letter that your Eminence was pleased to write to me on the

⁷ Appendix No. 4, p. 118.

⁸ See the Nuncio's reply, July 5th, Appendix No. 8, p. 122.

9th of last month concerning the matter of the missions in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America," brought him the news of Carroll's appointment, and informed him of the purpose of the Congregation to elect that clergyman Vicar-Apostolic "when proofs of his ability and capacity will have been received, together with the information requested of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister plenipotentiary of the Most Christian King near the states of the aforesaid republic, who will be in France in a few days." The same news was communicated to Franklin who, like Vergennes, was pleased though he "would have wished that Carroll had already been elected." On Franklin's assurance that the American Congress would be "most pleased," the Nuncio, "not to make Mr. Franklin believe that financial considerations entered into the business," refrained from speaking of the cost of living for a bishop in the United States, but contented himself with inquiring about the cost of transportation for two students. Vergennes, on his side, undertook to send with his own despatch the letters addressed to Carroll by both the Prefect and the Nuncio, and reiterated his promise that the King would defray the expenses of eight or ten students at Bordeaux, though the Bishop of Autun was still uncertain about the establishment of a special fund for that purpose.

The next day, June 30, the Prefect acknowledged to the Nuncio⁹ the "prompt information of the happy results of the assistance lent in the United States of America by the Chevalier de la Luzerne"—an assistance to be given, not by the Minister, who had already left his post, but by the *Chargé d'Affaires*, Barbé-Marbois. The Cardinal renewed his request that the Nuncio thank in the name of His Holiness, "that worthy Count of Vergennes for the efficiency with which he has lent himself to the establishment of those missions." He directed the Nuncio "in view of the favorable reply of

⁹ Appendix No. 5, p. 119.

the Chevalier," to acknowledge those offices also, and expressed the hope that "direct correspondence having been established with Mr. Carroll . . . matters, little by little, will be made smooth, without further annoyance and inconvenience to that minister." More explicit words could not have been used by the Roman Prelate to make clear that in the whole affair the French agent in the United States, as well as the Prime Minister himself, only gave their services and endeavored to meet the wishes of the Holy See.

Nevertheless, the Prefect remained anxious regarding the scholarships to be established at Bordeaux. He wished to know whether the Bishop of Autun had consented to assign a fixed income to those scholarships, for, he pleaded, "the Sacred Congregation is not in a position to undertake the burden of them, while that of the scholarships at the college [of Propaganda] and of the supplements for the support of the bishop or Vicar-Apostolic in America, would be of considerable weight." France, it is clear, was looked upon as the generous provider of such funds as would be needed. In the light of the Prefect's expectation the following lines of a letter addressed by Vergennes to la Luzerne on the day the Prefect wrote to the Nuncio, are significant. France had almost exhausted her resources in helping the colonies in their struggle; she had not only lent or donated money, but had endorsed the loans the Americans had secured from Holland, and on these loans she had to pay the interest due by the United States. So the Prime Minister writes to the Chevalier:¹⁰

I was not aware that Mr. Franklin had suffered drafts of Mr. Morris to be protested. I am not sorry, because that will serve as a lesson to the Americans. They think our resources inexhaustible for them, while they do not deign to take trouble about providing means for themselves, nor for the reimbursement of the advances that we have made to them, and procured for them. I think nothing of the

¹⁰ Bancroft, p. 375.

loss of the subjects of the king for having placed confidence in American people. This article alone has done an almost irreparable injury to the reputation of the Americans. If congress cannot procure money to balance their account with us, it is important for us, at least in this moment, that it should put us in condition to meet the interest of the loan in Holland.

The main points of the story of Carroll's appointment as Superior of the American Missions find their confirmation in an entry of Franklin's *Private Journal*¹¹ under date of July 1, 1784. Franklin states without reservation that the Nuncio "acquainted me that the Pope had, on my recommendation, appointed Mr. John Carroll superior of the Catholic clergy in America," and that he assured the Nuncio that the American government would not take offense at Carroll being consecrated by a bishop of an English province "unless the ordination by that bishop should give him some authority over our bishop." To the surprise of the American minister, the Nuncio protested that once ordained, the American bishop "would be independent of the others, and even of the Pope; which I did not clearly understand." Of course, the Nuncio referred not to spiritual but to temporal independence. The Prelate confirmed to Franklin the Congregation's agreement "to receive, and maintain and instruct, two young Americans," and Franklin notes he had been already told "that more would be educated *gratis* in France." The interview ended with the Nuncio's incidental assurance that the American government would find that "the Catholics were not so intolerant as they had been represented, and that the Inquisition in Rome had not so much power as that in Spain."

Meanwhile news of Carroll's appointment had reached England, and on July 3rd Charles Plowden directed to his friend a letter which reveals his persistent distrust of the Congregation of Propaganda:¹²

¹¹ Appendix No. 6, p. 120.

¹² Appendix No. 7, p. 120.

It appears, however, to me, a great incongruity that a negotiation should be carried on between the American States and the Court of Rome upon affairs of the Catholic Religion without the participation of the priests who are actually in the country. If Dr. Franklin reflects, he must see the impropriety of such an act and be sensible that your civil and ecclesiastical rights may be much prejudiced by it.

As a matter of fact, one of Franklin's main objects in those days was, as shown by his second note to the Nuncio, that "the bonds [between American and English Catholics] be diminished and weakened by taking from the British ministry all influence over the subjects of the United States."

In view of this one wonders how Franklin received the representatives sent from England by American missionaries at Plowden's instigation, "to entreat him not to concur in any proposal which might be detrimental to the tranquility and prosperity" of the American Church. The English Jesuit had been careful not to write, himself, as he felt that "a confidential representation will come with better grace from American Catholic clergymen than from British-born priests."

Plowden informs Carroll that "Mr. Thorpe and the Cardinal (Borromeo) judged the Memorial which came to Rome in the name of Messrs. John Lewis and his associates could not be presented in its own full shape; it demanded too much, it demanded it in a manner too immethodical." Carroll could not be unaware that "prudence was highly requisite as well to obtain your request as to remove every occasion to the gentlemen of Propaganda introducing their own pretensions."

He ends with a final thrust at the Propaganda whose intentions must be suspected even when they award honors:

They must have some motive for delegating you with plenitude of power while the negotiation between Doria and Franklin is yet undetermined. Perhaps they feared that it might result in the establishing a Bishop in Ordinary which would at once withdraw the Americans Missions from their control.

On July 5, 1784, the Nuncio, reporting at length to the Cardinal Prefect the result of his visits to Vergennes and Franklin, congratulated himself "that the matter is admirably well under way and that nothing is wanting except to receive the information asked from America, which will probably be furnished by the Chevalier de la Luzerne," who would be in France in a few days. Whether the Chevalier, who had left America before receiving the letters directed to him May 12th from Paris, was able when he reached the Capital to give, at least in part, the information desired, can not be ascertained; but on the same day the Nuncio forwarded to John Carroll the packet committed to him by the Propaganda, with a covering letter¹³ evidencing once more the Prelate's caution in conducting the business. While he gives full direction for sending the two American students who were to be received at the College of the Propaganda, he refrains from mentioning the plans under consideration for the free education in France of eight or ten more students. No doubt the Nuncio felt then as he did on September 1, 1783, that the question was as yet "of a mere project, of which it would not be well to speak before it be realized, or developed sufficiently not to be frustrated by any one who might regard the proposed establishment unfavorably."

On the last day of July 1784 the Prefect conveyed to the Paris Nuncio¹⁴ the praise of the Holy Father for his wisdom in conducting "the matter, happily begun, of the establishment of the missions" in America, and especially "for securing the education, at one of the seminaries of Bordeaux, of eight or ten young Americans, who are to be supported by the liberality of His Most Christian Majesty." He therefore directs him "to send, without delay, an official letter of thanks to Monseigneur the bishop of Autun, to whose department the Matter belongs." Even then, holding firmly to his cherished idea of a permanent establishment

¹³ Appendix No. 9, p. 123.

¹⁴ Appendix No. 10, p. 124.

for that purpose in France, under the same favorable conditions, the Prefect insists on the necessity of exercising more pressure on the Minister of Ecclesiastical Benefices:

If you deem it expedient, take advantage of this opportunity to suggest to that Prelate that a fixed fund would be more expeditious and less subject to variations.

He commends the Nuncio's wisdom "in the matter of informing the Count of Vergennes and Mr. Franklin of the selection of Mr. Carroll as the new superior of the above mission."

This may be taken as new evidence that the main object of the Prefect's appeal to France all through the negotiation was to secure from her financial assistance for the support and training of American missionaries.

On August 15th, about the time that this letter reached Paris, Barbé-Marbois sent his first reply to the questions which had been put to the Minister, la Luzerne. This reply, in which the *Chargé d'Affaires* urged discretion in the matter of appointing a bishop for the United States, and speaks against the choice of a French bishop, has already been quoted.¹⁵ He vouched for Carroll's good reputation and eligibility for the American episcopacy, and informed the minister that he had directed to Charles Carroll's relative the letter addressed to "one of the missionaries living in America."

Strangely enough, it was not until August 18, 1784, that Franklin forwarded to the Nuncio¹⁶ "a copy of the instruction of Congress," which had been voted May 11th. It was, therefore, from la Luzerne's letter of January 31, 1784, received in Paris April 23rd, that the Nuncio and, through him, the Roman authorities, obtained their first intimation of the response made by Congress to his application of July 28, 1783.

¹⁵ See Chapter III, Appendix 10, p. 88.

¹⁶ Appendix No. 11, p. 125.

This chapter on the Roman phase of the negotiation may end by calling attention to four documents: the first emanating from the Nuncio under date of August 23, 1784, the second and third from the Cardinal Prefect dated September 25th and December 11th respectively, of the same year, and the last, of May 24, 1785, containing the instructions given to the Nuncio Doria Pamphili's successor.

The Nuncio acknowledged the compliments received from the Cardinal Prefect and promised to convey the thanks of the Holy Father to the Bishop of Autun.¹⁷ He felt bound, however, to warn his superior regarding the matter the Prefect seemed to have so much at heart, namely, the establishment of a fund for the education of American seminarians in France:

I do not allow myself to hope that he [the Bishop of Autun] will be willing to establish a fixed fund, because it is not certain that, as time goes on, the American Republic will continue to be grateful for the signal favors and services of France.

We have here an echo of the philosophy expressed by the Comte de Vergennes in his instructions to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, July 21, 1783: "We have never founded our policy with regard to the United States on their gratitude; this sentiment is infinitely rare among sovereigns, and republics do not know it."¹⁸ The Nuncio promised to inform Franklin of the Propaganda's intention to hasten Carroll's consecration, and also that it looked forward with pleasure to the coming of the two American students. He transmitted to Rome Franklin's letter containing the note of Congress of May 11th, and expressed his conviction that the attitude of Congress would please both His Holiness and the Congregation.

The first letter of the Prefect¹⁹ is a mere acknowledgment of the Nuncio's message; the next,²⁰ to be followed shortly

¹⁷ Appendix No. 12, p. 125.

¹⁸ Bancroft, p. 325.

¹⁹ Appendix No. 13, p. 126.

²⁰ Appendix No. 14, p. 127.

by the Nuncio's recall to Rome and his elevation to the Cardinalate, contains a warm expression of gratitude on the part of the Prefect and the Congregation to the Papal representative "for the promptness with which you conduct its urgent business matters to their required ends, which is due, not only to your zeal, but, also to the prudent skill and to the masterly efficiency of your Lordship."

The instructions given May 24, 1785²¹ to Monseigneur Dugnani, who succeeded Prince Doria Pamphili as Papal Nuncio in Paris, were to convey "an idea of the course until now of the matters with which the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda had been dealing through the intermediary of the nunciature of France." They are a summary of the negotiations which had occupied the past two years and represent the view taken of them by the Roman authorities:

The Nuncio should know of the establishment that it has been proposed to give to Catholicism in the new republic of the United provinces in America. This matter crowned the nunciature of the Most Eminent Doria, to whose zeal and activity is due the merit of the entire work.

It has been determined to establish a vicar-apostolic in that part of the new republic that may appear to be the most desirable for the purpose. The Sacred Congregation has promised to contribute to the support of the Vicar, who will be invested with the character of bishop also. The subject for this dignity has been selected; he is a certain Mr. Carroll, who is a missionary in that country, and of whom the Congregation has received the best reports. The selection of this subject was ardently desired also by the minister Mr. Franklin, who is residing at Paris.

But, in order to have new workers among those Christians, the Eminent Doria thought of obtaining from the munificence of the Most Christian King an assignment for eight or ten young men, to be brought from America to be educated at one of the seminaries of Bordeaux, and received full assurance of its granting from Monseigneur d'Autun, who has the ministry of ecclesiastical benefices. . . .

²¹ Appendix No. 15, p. 128.

All of this plan was accepted with pleasure by Mr. Franklin, and also by the congress in America, to which, it was recommended by the worthy count of Vergennes.

The final impression resulting from a study of what may be called the Roman phase of the negotiation is a confirmation of the conviction formed in studying its French phase. Throughout the proceedings the initiative remained in the hands of the Roman authorities; France was merely called upon to lend her assistance and to provide not only her good offices in facilitating the transactions between the Holy See and the American authorities, but also her financial aid in the realization of the plan which was of such prime importance in the eyes of the Holy See, for training and maintaining missionaries who were to carry on the Catholic apostolate in the United States.

APPENDICES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Memorandum respecting Catholic Missions in the United States (undated)
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9. The Nuncio to John Carroll, July 5, 1784
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11. Franklin to the Nuncio, August 18, 1784
12. The Nuncio to the Cardinal Prefect, August 23, 1784
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15. Instructions for the Nuncio Dugnani, May 24, 1785

1. MEMORANDUM RESPECTING CATHOLIC MISSIONS
IN THE UNITED STATES.¹

[Undated.]

The Catholic Mission in the regions of North America then subject to the dominion of Great Britain was begun and founded before 1640, during the reign of Charles I, by priests of the English Province of the Society of Jesus, who cultivated it at their own expense with manifold and great labors, at the beginning on the seacoast of Maryland, and afterwards they extended it to the interior and remoter parts of the same Province and also here and there into Virginia and Pennsylvania, with great increase everywhere of faith and religion. They and their successors of the same Society and Province, though harassed by various and multiplied vexations, persevered constantly in spreading the Catholic faith through the aforesaid regions, and in promoting everywhere the salvation of the inhabitants, until towards the end of 1773, by the authority of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide the Brief suppressing the Society of Jesus was announced to them—all the missionaries being members of the said Society. But, since there were no other priests whatsoever at hand, nor could others be obtained from elsewhere to aid this mission then in extreme peril, the same missionaries, although deprived of the aid of their brethren and religious institutes [*religionis legibus*], in order that they might not abandon the faithful scattered in widely separated districts, and deprived of all spiritual succors amidst the troubles of a war constantly breaking out in hostilities [every day] on every side, with the approbation of the Vicar-Apostolic of the London District, held their stations, and with unabated zeal and industry persevered in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord amid many perils, and they still persevere in this work. But, being reduced in number, and of those who remain some being broken down by labor, others being advanced in years, they invited to the harvest those priests especially who being natives of North America were lately living in England and elsewhere. The number of those who are now laboring on this mission scarcely goes beyond twenty; but when duly authorized [*propria*] ecclesiastical jurisdiction is once established, many worthy priests will more easily be joined to them. For, liberty of conscience being granted and confirmed by the laws of the Republic, the Catholic faith at length seems to breathe freely

¹ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-218.

[*hic* around here], and the number of the faithful is daily increasing in all directions; furthermore, many Catholic families are now getting ready to emigrate from the more thickly settled sections of the country and to join the new settlements [*ad colonias deducendas*] in the rich prairie lands along the Mississippi River, which recognize the United States Government. All these families earnestly ask for Catholic priests to accompany them to their new homes, and to remain there permanently with them.

2. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.²

To Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris.

June 9th, 1784.

From the subjoined letter that Your Lordship will be kind enough to forward to Mr. Carrol, you will see how promptly His Holiness and this Sacred Congregation have seconded the desire shown by Mr. Franklin, as well as by many members of the congress, that said Carrol be placed at the head of the missions in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America, thus withdrawing them from the dependency upon the Vicar-Apostolic of London, to whom they were originally entrusted.

Prior to the last dispatch of Your Lordship of the 17th of last May, some letters were received by this Congregation from the missionaries of Maryland and Pennsylvania, informing it of the present state of the Christian establishment of those parts, and requesting that Mr. Lowis be put in charge of it, he being the same to whom the Vicar-Apostolic of London had given that charge. From the copies of these letters that I forward to Your Lordship, you will see that by the subjects who ask for Lowis as superior, Carrol's name appears in the last place. This fact shows that Carrol has not co-operated with the earnest solicitation of Mr. Franklin in his behalf, and consequently, it has helped to give him the preference over Lowis; who, moreover, being 64 years of age, as the letters in question show, would seem to deserve rest. For the establishment of a new system of missions, not only experience is necessary, but, also, the age of activity, to work and to do. We are not informed of the age of Carrol,³ but it may be assumed to be a much more vigorous one than that of Lowis, since he is named last in the petition. Three

² Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-217.

³ He was then 49 years of age.

points, then, were shown in the proposal that was sent to you with our dispatch of the 27th of September, 1783. The first was the establishment of a bishop, or of a Vicar-Apostolic invested with the episcopal character, in the states of the new American republic. His Holiness has this point at heart, and wishes that it be reduced to practice as soon as possible. It was said that the Holy Congregation would supply from its treasury an allowance for that bishop or vicar-apostolic. From the letter that is being sent to Mr. Carrol, Your Lordship will see that, with some delicacy, he is asked for information concerning the funds that may be available for those missions in America, not that there be a refusal to supply the amount needed, but, to examine carefully the amount to which this assistance may rise, all the more, since there is no information of what the living of a bishop or Vicar-Apostolic in America may cost. Until now, the Sacred Congregation has had no expenditures in that part of the world, and consequently, there is need of special information, to serve as guidance on this subject, which may be furnished by no one better than by Your Lordship who has managed the entire matter with so much zeal and dexterity. The habitual stipends of bishops and of vicars-apostolic who are supported by the Sacred Congregation in the other three parts of the world, are of 200 or 300 dollars a year, at most, over and above the other, uncertain income that, even in the most barbarous countries, is obtained by him who, as pastor, bears all their responsibility. When the point of the supplement for the maintenance of the bishop or vicar-apostolic is determined, there will remain that of determining his selection. The latter might be in favor of Mr. Carrol, if he be endowed with the necessary requirements; and in this, it is necessary that Your Lordship seek light for our guidance. Meanwhile, the authority resting upon him will reveal the conduct of the man and the satisfaction that it gives, not only to the Catholics, but, also, to the congress, which, although it wisely purposes not to interfere in the affairs of our holy religion, deserves, nevertheless, and should have, all possible consideration, for the protection which should be expected from the congress, itself, upon occasion. When these two points will have been dilucidated [elucidated], the destination of the bishop or vicar-apostolic will be determined as may appear to be to the better interest of those Christian communities.

The second point was the offer of the scholarships in our Collegio Urbano; and this point requiring no further investigations, Mr. Carrol is told, in the letter to him, that, for the present, he send two

young men to be educated there. With this mission, our college will glory in the Lord that it lends itself to the education of the youth of the four parts of the world. It is suggested only to said Carrol that he form a plan for the expenses of the voyages, and this plan will serve as a guide for future stipends.

Finally, the third point concerned provision for a more extensive education of evangelical workers, by procuring from the generous piety of His Most Christian Majesty a retreat, in some seminary of France, for a greater number of young Americans. The proposal that Monseigneur the bishop of Autun made to you on this subject, that is, to use one of the seminaries at Bordeaux, a city that is near the sea, and in commercial relations with North America, is excellent, and is quite pleasing to His Holiness. There is one thing that was not made clear in the dispatch of Your Lordship, it is whether Mgr. d'Autun meant, by his proposal to you, to assign some fund for the maintenance of these scholarships which were sought for eight or ten young Americans. If this be the case, the wishes of the Holy Father are accomplished; in the contrary event, the Holy Congregation being unable to assume the burden of this expense, it would be well for Your Lordship to make a new effort to succeed in the premises, facilitating matters in relation to the number of the young men, proportionately with the offers made, so that if it were not possible to arrange for eight or ten, there might be received, for the present, four or six, to be supported with some pension or ecclesiastical fund, to be assigned by that Most Christian Monarch. It is very necessary to have further light on this subject, for our peace and guidance.

For the rest, His Holiness and the Holy Congregation have greatly commended the diligence and the zeal of Your Lordship in the management of all this important matter; and as the congress sees well that church affairs are not of its competency, it has been decided to deal with this matter by letter, directly with the American missionaries, and for the present, with Mr. Carrol, who has been constituted their head, except in what concerns the young men who, it is hoped, will be received in the seminaries of Bordeaux, for which Your Lordship may continue to negotiate with Monseigneur d'Autun, or with whoever else can assist to the desired end. On the other hand, Your Lordship will not fail to convey to the Count of Vergennes, as well as to Mr. Franklin, the satisfaction of the Holy Father and of this Congregation in the entire matter; and likewise, to Monseigneur d'Autun, when the conclusion of the question of the scholarships at

Bordeaux will have been reached. While reiterating the assurance of our great obligation, I heartily offer myself to you, and remain.

3. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO JOHN CARROLL.⁴

Rome, June 9, 1784.

Very Rev. Sir:

In order to preserve and defend Catholicity in the Thirteen United States of North America, the Supreme Pontiff of the Church, Pius VI, and this Sacred Congregation have thought it extremely proper to designate a pastor who should, permanently and independently of any ecclesiastical power, except the same Sacred Congregation, attend to the spiritual necessities of the Catholic flock. In the appointment of such a pastor, the Sacred Congregation would have readily cast its eyes on the Rev. John Lewis if his advanced age and the labors he has already undergone in the vineyard of the Lord had not deterred it from imposing on him a new and very heavy burden; for he seems to require repose rather than arduous labor. As then, Rev. Sir, you have given conspicuous proofs of piety and zeal, and it is known that your appointment will please and gratify many members of that republic, and especially Mr. Franklin, the eminent individual who represents the same republic at the court of the Most Christian King, the Sacred Congregation, with the approbation of His Holiness, has appointed you Superior of the Mission in the thirteen United States of North America, and has communicated to you the faculties, which are necessary to the discharge of that office; faculties which are also communicated to the other priests of the same States, except the administration of Confirmation, which is reserved for you alone, as the enclosed documents will show.

These arrangements are meant to be only temporary. For it is the intention of His Holiness soon to charge a Vicar-Apostolic, invested with the title and character of bishop, with the care of those states, that he may attend to ordination and other episcopal functions. But to accomplish this design, it is of great importance that we should be made acquainted with the state of the orthodox religion in those thirteen states. Therefore we request you to forward to us, as soon as possible, a correct report, stating carefully the number of Catholics in each state; what is their condition, their piety and what abuses exist; also how many missionary priests labor now in that vineyard of the Lord; what are their qualifications, their zeal, their mode of

⁴ Guilday, pp. 203-204.

support. For though the Sacred Congregation wish not to meddle with temporal things, it is important for the establishment of laborers, that we should know what are the ecclesiastical revenues, if any there are, and it is believed there are some. In the meantime for fear the want of missionaries should deprive the Catholics of spiritual assistance, it has been resolved to invite hither two youths from the states of Maryland and Pennsylvania, to educate them at the expense of the Sacred Congregation in the Urban College; they will afterwards, on returning to their country, be substitutes in the mission. We leave to your solicitude the care of selecting and sending them. You will make choice of those who have more promising talents and a good constitution, who are not less than twelve, nor more than fifteen years of age; who by their proficiency in the sanctuary may give great hopes of themselves. You may address them to the excellent Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris, who is informed of their coming. If the young men selected are unable to defray the expenses of the voyage, the Sacred Congregation will provide for them; we even wish to be informed by you frankly and accurately of the necessary traveling expenses, to serve as a rule for the future. Such are the things I have to signify to you; and whilst I am confident you will discharge the office committed to you with all zeal, solicitude and fidelity, and more than answer the high opinion we have formed of you, I pray God that he may grant you all peace and happiness.

L. CARD. ANTONELLI,
Prefect.

STEPHEN BORGIA,
Secretary.

4. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO BISHOP JAMES TALBOT.⁵

To his Lordship James Talbot, Bishop of Birtha, Vicar-Apostolic in the Kingdom of England.

London, June 19, 1784.

As the Catholics inhabiting the thirteen United States of America have been forbidden by the magistrates of that Republic to have any longer as their Superiors Vicars-Apostolic dwelling in foreign countries, and as for the preservation of religion the missionaries dwelling there have petitioned the Holy See to provide for their spiritual necessities, the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda with the

⁵ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

approbation of His Holiness Pius VI, has appointed as Superior of said Mission John Carroll, a man of approved virtue and ability, and has granted to him all necessary and proper faculties independently of any ecclesiastical jurisdiction save that of the Sacred Congregation. Furthermore, His Holiness judges it fitting to appoint, and intends shortly to appoint for those provinces a Bishop or Vicar-Apostolic with episcopal title and character who shall have power to administer to the faithful all the offices of religion that require Episcopal authority. I, therefore, hasten to communicate this to Your Lordship, to whom the spiritual care of those Catholics was formerly entrusted; not doubting that the foresight of this Congregation in providing for the welfare of religion will be most pleasing to Your Lordship also, I pray that God may prolong your life, and protect you.

5. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.⁶

To Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleccion, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris.

June 30th, 1784.

I owe to the attested diligence of Your Lordship this prompt information of the happy results of the assistance lent in the United States of America by the Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister of the court of France to those states. I have already begged Your Lordship to thank, also in the name of His Holiness, that worthy count of Vergennes, for the efficiency with which he has lent himself to the establishment of those missions. In view of the favorable reply of the above Chevalier, Your Lordship will be able to acknowledge those offices also. Meanwhile, direct correspondence having been established with Mr. Carroll, who has been put at the head of those missions, matters, little by little, will be made smooth, without further annoyance and inconvenience to that minister. The only point awaiting solution, as I wrote to you, was as to information from Monseigneur d'Autun concerning the scholarships in one of the seminaries of Bordeaux, that is, whether the Prelate consented to assign to those scholarships a fixed income, for the Sacred Congregation is not in a position to undertake the burden of them, while that of the scholarships at this college and of the supplements for the support of the bishop or Vicar-apostolic in America will be of considerable weight.

⁶ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

6. EXTRACT FROM FRANKLIN'S PRIVATE JOURNAL.⁷

July 1st. [1784]—The Pope's Nuncio called, and acquainted me that the Pope had, on my recommendation, appointed Mr. John Carroll superior of the Catholic clergy in America, with many of the powers of a bishop; and that probably he would be made a bishop *in partibus* before the end of the year. He asked me which would be more convenient for him, to come to France, or go to St. Domingo, for ordination by another bishop, which was necessary. I mentioned Quebec as more convenient than either. He asked whether, as that was an English province, our government might not take offence at his going thither? I thought not, unless the ordination by that bishop should give him some authority over our bishop. He said, not in the least; that when our bishop was once ordained, he would be independent of the others, and even of the Pope; which I did not clearly understand. He said the Congregation *de Propagandâ Fide* had agreed to receive, and maintain and instruct, two young Americans in the languages and sciences at Rome (he had formerly told me that more would be educated *gratis* in France). He added they had written from America that there are twenty priests, but that they are not sufficient, as the new settlements near the Mississippi have need of some.

The Nuncio said we should find that the Catholics were not so intolerant as they had been represented; that the Inquisition in Rome had not now so much power as that in Spain; and that in Spain it was used chiefly as a prison of state. That the Congregation would have undertaken the education of more American youths, and may hereafter, but that at present they are overburdened, having some from all parts of the world. He spoke lightly of their New Bostonian convert Thayer's conversion; that he had advised him not to go to America, but settle in France. That he wanted to go to convert his countrymen; but he knew nothing yet of his new religion himself, etc.

7. CHARLES PLOWDEN TO JOHN CARROLL.⁸

[Extract]

[July 3, 1784]

It appears, however, to me, a great incongruity that a negotiation should be carried on between the American States and the Court of

⁷ Bigelow, Vol. VIII, p. 509.⁸ Guilday, p. 174.

Rome upon affairs of the Catholic Religion without the participation of the priests who are actually in the country. If Dr. Franklin reflects, he must see the impropriety of such an act and be sensible that your civil and ecclesiastical rights may be much prejudiced by it. It is not improbable that the ultimate answer of the States and of Franklin will be that your country is open to the Roman Catholic as well as to other religions, leaving the manner of establishing it to the Pope, that is, to the Propaganda. This is just the answer lately given by the King of Sweden during his residence at Rome. In consequence of it a Vicar-Apostolic is named to go to Stockholm, and a sum of money is given to build a Catholic Church. Now, as Franklin may be presumed to be less informed than we could wish upon these matters, I have desired Messrs. Sewall, Hoskins, and Mattingly to write to him with a view of giving him information, and as you are personally acquainted with him, I trust you will zealously do the same. A confidential representation will come with better grace from American Catholic clergymen than from British-born priests . . . I have suggested to them to entreat Franklin not to concur in any proposal which may be detrimental to the tranquillity and prosperity [of your Church] . . . I have had the consolation to receive information that on the 9th of last month the Propaganda had sent off ample faculties, according to the tenor of the petition, with power to give the Sacrament of Confirmation to you, and that you are to be appointed Bishop and Vicar-Apostolic as soon as proper information can be procured from America. I heartily congratulate with religion, you and your country. Mr. Thorpe and the Cardinal judged that the Memorial which came to Rome in the name of Messrs. John Lewis and his associates could not be presented in its own full shape; it demanded too much, it demanded it in a manner too immethodical, and it would have given occasion to too many comments which at such a distance from information could not well be answered. You cannot be ignorant that prudence was highly requisite as well to obtain your request as to remove every occasion to the gentlemen of Propaganda introducing their own pretensions . . . They must have some motive for delegating you with plenitude of power while the negotiation between Doria and Franklin is yet undetermined. Perhaps they feared that it might result in the establishing a Bishop in Ordinary which would at once withdraw the American Missions from their control. Our friends at Rome have taken much pains to inculcate the danger of introducing any alien or foreigners with spiritual powers into your Missions, and, it seems, with some success.

8. THE NUNCIO TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT.⁹

Without communicating to the Count of Vergennes the contents of the respected letter that Your Eminence was pleased to write to me on the 9th of last month, concerning the matter of the missions in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America, on Tuesday, I told him that the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, with the approval of the Holy Father, had chosen Mr. Carroll for superior of those missions, and that, accordingly, the Sacred Congregation was sending to Carroll, with an official letter, all the necessary faculties and instructions, reserving the purpose to elect him vicar-apostolic with the character of bishop, when proofs of his ability and capacity will have been received, together with the information requested of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister plenipotentiary of the Most Christian King near the states of the aforesaid republic, who will be in France in a few days. The Count of Vergennes, and Mr. Franklin, showed themselves to be most pleased with this information, and charged me to thank you for it, most especially; the Count of Vergennes undertook to send with his dispatch the letter of Your Eminence, and one from me, to Mr. Carroll. Mr. Franklin would have wished that Carroll had already been elected bishop, assuring me that the American congress will be most pleased with such a consummation, and will not oppose Mr. Carroll's going to Canada for his consecration by Monseigneur the bishop of Quebec, the nearest place, and not as inconvenient or expensive as it would be to come to France, or to go to the Island of Santo Domingo. In order not to make Mr. Franklin believe that financial considerations entered into the business, I abstained from speaking of the cost of living for a bishop, or Vicar-Apostolic with episcopal character. I did ask Mr. Franklin, however, how much it would cost, approximately, to bring two young men from America to France; he answered that, as the passage is not yet reduced to regular tariff, he could not give me a specific answer, but, that it could not be more than 70, or 80, Louis d'or, which is equivalent to from 1680 to 1920 livres. With regard to the eight or ten young Americans whom, as I had the honor of informing Your Eminence by my letter of the 17th of May, Monseigneur the bishop of Autun proposes to establish in one of the seminaries of Bordeaux, to pursue there the necessary studies to become able missionaries, their expenses will be

⁹ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-222.

defrayed by the Most Christian King, who has it very much at heart to provide those missions with capable subjects; but Monseigneur d'Autun is not yet certain whether a special fund will be destined to this purpose, or whether he will give a sum each year, for eight, ten, or more students, according to requirement; wherefore, I limited myself to saying that "two or three students may be received at the college of the Propaganda, which latter will not only support these students, but, will provide for the support of the bishop *in partibus*, vicar-apostolic, to be sent to Maryland." Your Eminence will see, therefore, that the matter is admirably well under way and that nothing is wanting, except to receive the information asked from America, which will probably be furnished by the Chevalier de la Luzerne. This is all that occurs to me of which to inform you, while with all homage I have the honor to be

Of Your Eminence, the Very Humble, Devoted, and Grateful Servant

G. Archbishop of *Seleucia*.

Paris, July 5th, 1784.

9. THE NUNCIO TO JOHN CARROLL.¹⁰

Paris, July 5th, 1784

I have the honor, Sir, to send you the packet herewith which the congregation of the propaganda have committed to me. I am much gratified at the confidence which his holiness places in you, and the esteem in which he holds your merit. You will see by the letter which that congregation writes you, that it empowers you to send two young Americans to Rome, there to be raised to the ecclesiastical state, and to fill one day the functions of missionaries in your country. I do not doubt that you will give all attention in their choice, because they should be competent to the object for which they are destined. I beg you will procure their passage with the least possible delay, and accompany them with an open letter in Latin or French. This letter will serve to make them known to the bishop or other ecclesiastical superior of any port of France in which they may arrive, to whom they can have recourse in case of need. If they arrive in the port of l'Orient, or that of Nantes, or any other near Paris, they can present themselves in that capital, where I will assume the care of

¹⁰ Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 795-796, incorrectly dated 1783.

forwarding them to Rome. If it be Bayonne or Bordeaux, they can take the route to Marseilles, and there present themselves to Mr. Ranzoni, consul of his holiness, whom I shall previously instruct to facilitate their passage to their destination. Nothing can be added to the sentiments of esteem and consideration with which I have the honor to be,

Sir, your very humble servant,

J. DORIA PAMPHILI, archbishop of *Seleucia*, nuncio of the pope.

To M. L'Abbé Carroll of Maryland, apostolic missionary.

10. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.¹¹

To Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio. Paris.

July 31st, 1784.

The attested wisdom of Your Lordship has so well conducted the matter, happily begun, of the establishment of the missions in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America, that His Holiness, to whom full relation of all has been made, has not only been much pleased, but, has praised you a great deal for it, and especially for securing the education, at one of the seminaries of Bordeaux, of eight or ten young Americans, who are to be supported by the liberality of His Most Christian Majesty. His Holiness desires, accordingly, that Your Lordship will be pleased to send, without delay, an official letter of thanks to Monseigneur the bishop of Autun, to whose department the Matter belongs. If you deem it expedient, take advantage of this opportunity to suggest to that Prelate that a fixed fund would be more expeditious and less subject to variations. Your Lordship acted with great wisdom in the matter of informing the count of Vergennes and Mr. Franklin of the selection of Mr. Carroll as the new superior of the above missions. Let Mr. Franklin not doubt that, in what depends upon us, it will be sought to invest Mr. Carroll with the episcopal character as soon as he has informed us of the status of the Catholic religion in those provinces and of the system to be adopted. Meanwhile, the two young Americans called to our college will be expected, and Your Lordship, who

¹¹ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223.

is in correspondence with Mr. Carroll, can request him to send them, and undertake in our name responsibility for the reimbursement of the expenses of their voyage. Which is all that occurs to me to suggest to you, and reiterating the assurance of our great obligation, I heartily offer myself to you, and remain.

11. FRANKLIN TO THE NUNCIO.¹²

Mr. Franklin assures His Excellency the Nuncio of his respect and sends him a copy of the instruction of Congress which he had the honor of communicating to him, yesterday, with a translation which he seemed to desire.

Passy, August 18th, 1784.

12. THE NUNCIO TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT.¹³

Your Eminence may be well assured of the consolation that I derive from seeing by your worshipful letter of the 31st of July that the Holy Father deigned to be content with the course that I have followed to bring this matter of the establishment of the missions in the provinces of the new republic of the United States of North America to its desired end, and that he was especially pleased with the assurance of an education, at one of the seminaries of Bordeaux, of eight or ten young Americans, who are to be supported by the liberality of the Most Christian King. I will forthwith comply with the order that Your Eminence was pleased to give me in the name of His Holiness, to send an official letter of special thanks to Monseigneur the bishop of Autun for the part that he takes in the establishment of these young Americans; but I do not allow myself to hope that he will be willing to establish a fixed fund, because it is not certain that, as time goes on, the American Republic will continue to be grateful for the signal favors and services of France, and that revolutions will not occur, similar to that of Canada. It is necessary to accept with pleasure what may be obtained, and to be content with it, and to leave the future to what it will please God to dispose.

I will inform Mr. Franklin that the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for its own part, is very much disposed to hasten the consecration of Mr. Carroll as bishop, as soon as he shall have given an

¹² Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-224.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.

account of the status of the Catholic religion in the provinces of his republic of America and of the order of things to be established there; and, also, that the same Sacred Congregation expects with pleasure that the coming of the two young Americans who are called to its college will be hastened, and has already instructed me to defray the expenses of their voyage.

Mr. Franklin having communicated to me an extract of the instructions had from Congress under date of the 11th of May, 1784, concerning the request that I made of him, I begged him to furnish me a copy and a translation of it. He sent me both, with a note under date of the 18th of the present month; and I herewith transmit them to Your Eminence. I do not doubt that His Holiness and the Congregation will be pleased to learn through the above extract of the respectful sentiments of Congress towards His Holiness and towards the Pontifical State, and that the body in question declares that the affair, relating, as it does, to purely spiritual matters, is foreign to the powers and jurisdiction of Congress, which has not authority to grant or to refuse the request, that power being reserved to each state individually. And, ever more anxious to follow the most esteemed commands of Your Eminence, with all homage I subscribe myself

Of Your Eminence the Very Humble, Devoted, and Grateful
Servant

G. Archbishop of *Seleucia*.

Paris, August 23d, 1784.

13. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.¹⁴

To Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio in Paris.

September 25th, 1784.

I have seen with great satisfaction the answer that the Congress of the United States of America gave to Mr. Franklin in regard to the request that you made of him, and the Supreme Pontiff has been informed of the sentiments of respect which that Congress entertains for His Holiness and for the Pontifical State. I give you exceptional thanks for such gracious courtesy, and thank you also for the further offices that you had in mind in relation with Mr. Franklin, in regard to informing him of our disposition for the investiture of Mr. Carroll with the episcopacy.

¹⁴ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-226.

In that connection, I should inform you of the pleasure of this Sacred Congregation at the arrival of two young men from Madagascar, to be educated at this Collegio Urbano, hoping that in due course they may be of great assistance to the newly established mission of that island, in regard to which several opportune measures have already been taken. I will not omit, therefore, to recommend again to the attested zeal and efficiency of Your Lordship the renewal, to the Marshal de Castries, of those offices in this relation to which I referred in my letter of the 7th of July last; and promising myself the most happy results through your masterly management, I heartily offer myself to you, and remain.

14. THE CARDINAL PREFECT TO THE NUNCIO.¹⁵

To Monseigneur the Archbishop of Seleucia, Apostolic Nuncio at Paris.

December 11th, 1784.

It was the source of greatest satisfaction to me to receive the news that Your Lordship was pleased to send me, concerning Mr. John Thayer, native of Boston, to the effect that, after trying and causing to be tried the stability of his vocation for an ecclesiastical life, Your Lordship, in view of the faculties granted to you by His Holiness under date of the 21st of September, 1783, had conferred the clerical tonsure upon Mr. Thayer in your private chapel, and further, that you had succeeded in obtaining that Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris should place him in the seminary of Saint Sulpice, where he may continue the studies that are necessary in the state that he has adopted. I could not express to Your Lordship the gratitude of this Holy Congregation for the promptness with which you conduct its urgent business matters to their required ends, which is due, not only to your zeal, but, also, to the prudent skill and to the masterly efficiency of Your Lordship. Nevertheless, I will not omit to offer you the most expressive and affectionate thanks, assuring Your Lordship of the absolute satisfaction and most lively gratitude of these my Most Eminent Lords and my own. Expecting of your accustomed diligence some consoling development, I heartily offer myself to you, and remain.

¹⁵ Devitt, Propaganda Documents, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

15. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE NUNCIO.¹⁶

Instructions to Monseigneur Dugnani, new nuncio to France, May 24th, 1785.

In order that Monseigneur Dugnani, the new nuncio to Paris, may have an idea of the course until now of the matters with which the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda has been dealing through the intermediary of the nunciature of France, it is necessary that he be informed of the fact that there are at Paris two well known seminaries that are in correspondence with the Propaganda, these are the Seminary of Foreign Missions and that of Saint-Esprit. . . .

Finally, Monseigneur the Nuncio should know of the establishment that it has been proposed to give to Catholicism in the new republic of the United provinces in America. This matter crowned the nunciature of the Most Eminent Doria, to whose zeal and activity is due the merit of the entire work.

It has been determined to establish a vicar-apostolic in that part of the new republic that may appear to be the most desirable for the purpose. The Sacred Congregation has promised to contribute to the support of the vicar, who will be invested with the character of bishop also. The subject for this dignity has been selected; he is a certain Mr. Caroll, who is a missionary in that country, and of whom the Congregation has received the best reports. The selection of this subject was ardently desired also by the minister Mr. Franklin, who is residing at Paris.

But, in order to have new workers among those Christians, the Eminent Doria thought of obtaining from the munificence of the Most Christian King an assignment for eight or ten young men, to be brought from America to be educated at one of the seminaries of Bordeaux, and received full assurance of its granting from Monseigneur d'Autun, who has the ministry of ecclesiastical benefices.

In view of this, the Congregation, also, opened in its Collegio Urbano two scholarships for as many young Americans to be educated there at its expense.

All of this plan was accepted with pleasure by Mr. Franklin, and also by the congress in America, to which, it was recommended by the worthy count of Vergennes; but the answers awaited from the said Mr. Caroll have not yet been received.

Monseigneur the Nuncio will see what the course of this matter has been, by the original letters, which are furnished him. This being all etc.

¹⁶ Devitt, *Propaganda Documents, op. cit.*, pp. 228-229.

CHAPTER FIVE

AMERICAN REACTION, OCTOBER 1784 AND AFTERMATH

We might stop at this point, when the problem of the establishment of the American hierarchy had received its solution by the appointment of John Carroll as superior of the Catholic missions in the United States, and when that of the education and support of American students in a French seminary appeared to be on the way to a happy settlement through the promised cooperation from the French Government and Episcopate. We are not directly concerned with the reception of the Holy See's decision by the American clergy. John Carroll's hesitations, his misgivings about the exact import of the powers with which he had been vested, the persistent opposition of the majority of the clergy to a vicar-apostolic dependent upon the Congregation of the Propaganda interest us only insofar as they may throw some light on the character of the French intervention in the whole affair.

A point worthy of notice is that only after many months did the news reach America of the choice of a French seminary for the education of American seminarians and the establishment of a royal fund to defray their expenses. The discretion once recommended by the Nuncio seems to have been observed in this plan regarding the American clergy by all the parties cooperating in its elaboration; neither the Cardinal Prefect nor the Nuncio in their correspondence with John Carroll, nor the Prime Minister in his letters to his representative in the United States seems to have alluded to it. The first intimation appears to have come to the new Prefect Apostolic from his friend Father Thorpe, who, August 31, 1785, wrote from Rome: ¹

¹ Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 802.

The business of your nomination . . . as bishop in ordinary, or as apostolic vicar, depended on letters that were expected from France, when I was with Mr. Borgia, who also told me that His Christian Majesty had graciously offered eight free places in the seminary of Bordeaux for North American Catholic youths, born subjects of the United States.

Whether John Carroll ever thought of taking advantage of this offer, we have not been able to ascertain.

The first report of his appointment had come to John Carroll from Father Thorpe, who had written, as has been stated, on the very day the decree was issued in Rome. John Carroll received it August 20th, in his country mission at Rock Creek, Maryland, and replied at once, thanking his correspondent for his active and successful endeavors:²

I say successful, not because your partiality, as I presume, joined to that of my old cheerful friend, Dr. Franklin, suggested me to the consideration of His Holiness, but because you have obtained some form of spiritual government to be adopted for us.

Father Thorpe, however, refused to take the credit for Carroll's appointment.

The same report had reached England and elicited from Charles Plowden, in a letter to John Carroll of September 2nd of the same year,³ comments betraying the animus he had formerly shown towards the Roman authorities. He cannot help questioning the motives which may have determined the Holy See to confer upon his friend the superiority of the American missions:

I must repeat that there are certainly some oblique views, most probably directed to the property of the American mission, and to the obtaining superiority over the missionaries.

In view of the correspondence exchanged between the Propaganda and the Paris Nuncio, and the Prefect's first letter

² Appendix No. 5, p. 149.

³ This is the date given by Campbell. Guilday gives September 21st. Appendix No. 1, p. 145.

to John Carroll (June 9, 1784) in which he states that the Congregation "wish not to meddle with temporal things," one may judge how gratuitous and unjust are the English Jesuit's suspicions against the Roman Congregation. Far from coveting the property of the Order in America, Cardinal Antonelli had made it clear to the Nuncio and to Franklin that the Propaganda was ready to assume at least part of the burden of supporting the new bishop and educating the seminarians.

Charles Plowden continued:

The note delivered to the nuncio proves their wish to exclude every Jesuit from trust or honor, and equally betrays the policy of the French ministry ("the nation most friendly to congress") who, by bringing forward a Frenchman, or perhaps an Irish-Frenchman, would use religion as an instrument to increase their own influence in America.

Is it rash to trace to those words of the English Jesuit the origin of the legends of French interference in the affairs of the American Church and of the French scheme to make the nascent Church a dependency of the French Church? He was, in fact, altogether mistaken in ascribing to the French ministry the intention to exclude every Jesuit from trust or honor, since they and their *Chargé d'Affaires* in the United States had concurred in recommending the appointment of John Carroll. Neither was he justified in imputing to them a plan to use religion as an instrument of influence in America by appointing a French bishop, for the note to the Nuncio to which he evidently refers emanated from Franklin who, in his anxiety to break every bond between American and English Catholics, wished to take from the British ministry, as he said, all influence over the subjects of the United States, and thereby to secure the unity of the American government;⁴ indeed, on the contrary, Vergennes and the Bishop of Autun demurred from taking Franklin's pro-

⁴ See Chapter II, Appendix No. 6, p. 51.

posal under consideration, and the French Chargé d'Affaires advised most strongly against making the choice fall upon a French ecclesiastic; finally, it was Vergennes' policy, most explicitly stated in his instructions of July 21, 1783, to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, not to attempt to influence the internal affairs of the United States. Plowden's words deserved the rebuke which John Carroll had, on another occasion, administered to his friend when he warned the latter not to adopt "the language of some of the prints on your side of the water, by representing Americans under imperious leaders and the trammels of France."

But Plowden, in this letter to Carroll, soon turns from the French to the Romans and denounces the whole policy of the Holy See in appointing vicars-apostolic who administer Catholic missions under the authority of the Propaganda. He quotes from a letter of one of his friends:

With respect to the views of Rome upon America, all that I can tell you is that there is a treaty on foot to establish a vicar apostolic for the thirteen states, which treaty, I suppose, is near conclusion. I know not what the Americans will think of this plan, whether they would fear a too great dependence on Rome. This I know, that many English priests whom I have the honor to know here, think that apostolic vicars are the ruin of Catholicity in England, and that bishops properly established, would be the fit instruments of building a solid edifice, both here and in America.

He continues: "Make your own comments, my dear friend, on this extract, substitute a less violent word to *ruin*, and we shall easily agree with the writer." One last thrust at the "Romans," at the end of the letter seems to exonerate the French, even in the eyes of Charles Plowden, of responsibility in the affair:

The Romans have got scent of your promotion, and according to their custom have strangely distorted the whole business, even your name. They bring in the French king to figure in it, and talk of congress and your provincial assemblies as if they were so many *conseils souverains* in France.

This letter crossed one written September 15th to Plowden by John Carroll, who had not yet received from Barbé-Marbois the official notice of his appointment, as it was not forwarded to him until October 27th; he had, however, had time to ponder over the information received from Father Thorpe. Carroll's letter shows his mixed feelings and his very natural anxiety at the thought of the responsibility placed upon him. He is even tempted to decline the office:

I do assure you, dear Charles, that nothing personal to myself, excepting the dissolution of the society, ever gave me so much concern; and if a meeting of our gentlemen, to be held the 9th of October, agree in thinking that I can decline the intended office without grievous inconvenience, I shall certainly do so.

The true import of these words is found in a letter to the same friend written after the 26th of November: ⁵

I have before told you that nothing, since the dissolution of our poor society, ever gave me so much uneasiness as the first account of my being appointed a bishop. Luckily, the despatches from Rome only mention that the pope's intention is, hereafter, to appoint a vicar apostolic; but no intimation is given of time or person.

Coming back to his letter of September 15th, we find Carroll objecting to the plan of appointing a vicar-apostolic instead of a bishop in ordinary:

To govern the spiritual concerns of this country as a mission is absurd, seeing there is a regular clergy belonging to it; and with God's assistance there will be in time a succession of ministry to supply their places as they drop off.

These lines show that at least in this connection the discretion advised by the Nuncio had an unfortunate effect, for had Carroll known that a plan was being considered by the Roman Prelate and Franklin, with the cooperation of the French authorities, to provide for the education of American-born seminarians, his resentment would not have been so

⁵ Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 801.

keen. But the fact that the Roman authorities had chosen to deal directly with Franklin, without consulting the American clergy, gave John Carroll the greatest offense:

Nothing can place in a stronger light the aversion to the remains of the society, than the observation made by you of a negotiation being carried on, relative to the affairs of religion, with Dr. Franklin, without ever deigning to apply for information to the Catholic clergy in this country.

We can understand Carroll's resentment of an apparent slight, although he might have remembered the Roman tradition of not dealing directly with such as are not clothed with authority; as a matter of fact, however, he was on the eve of receiving through Barbé-Marbois, the Nuncio's letter directed to "one of the missionaries living in America." His very natural wish to see the clergy consulted had been anticipated.

That the prejudice against the Propaganda was shared by the English as well as by the American clergy appears from the letter dated September 21, 1784, from Bishop Talbot, Vicar-Apostolic of London, to John Carroll after his notification of the withdrawal of the American clergy from his jurisdiction.⁶ He wrote:

You have indeed obviated the chief difficulty I wished to caution you against, viz. that of being under the authority of the Propaganda. Your reasons are special, and Rome must come in at last to grant a jurisdiction ordinary.

The mind of the American clergy is fully revealed in the account of the meeting held at Whitemarsh October 11, 1784, the main object of which was to give final approval to the constitutions of the clergy.⁷ Carroll, as has been seen, was full of misgivings as to the manner in which his appointment would be regarded by his confreres. Attention was first directed to the "form of government" which was

⁶ Hughes, Vol. 1, part 2, p. 624.

⁷ See Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 371-373; Guilday, p. 205.

agreed to be by chapter and by a general procurator, and the delegates stressed the distinction between the procurator, who was to look after the temporal, and the superior *in spiritualibus*. Article XIX of the Regulations provided that:

The person invested with spiritual jurisdiction in this country, shall not, in that capacity, have any power over, or in the temporal property of the clergy.

When Father Thorpe's letter informing Carroll of his appointment—he was not to receive the official notice until November 6th—was laid before the Chapter, it led to the discussion of the question of a bishop for the United States. The delegates deemed a superior *in spiritualibus* adequate and therefore considered a bishop unnecessary, for the time being. In any case, if a bishop were sent, he should not be entitled to support from the present estates of the clergy; and a committee was appointed to draw up a petition to the Holy See against his appointment. The delegates were evidently concerned with the hope of restoring their Society, and bent on safeguarding the properties which might make that possible.

When this resolution was passed John Carroll had left the meeting. Writing on February 17, 1785, to Father Thorpe, he very pointedly calls his friend's attention to his absence at that time: ⁸

At the same meeting, but after I had left it thro' indisposition, a direction was given to Messrs Diderick, Morely and Matthews to write you a letter (I believe likewise a memorial to the Pope), against the appointment of a bishop.

On October 27, 1784,⁹ two weeks after the Whitemarsh meeting, the French Chargé d'Affaires directed to John Carroll the Roman documents afferent to his appointment, and having learned "by the address of that letter that his holiness has concluded his choice in regard to the head of

⁸ Appendix No. 5, p. 149.

⁹ Appendix No. 3, p. 147.

the Catholic church on this continent," Barbé-Marbois congratulated himself "in being one of the first to assure you that this choice will give general satisfaction." He ended his letter by placing himself at the new Prefect's service, if the latter's nomination "should produce any other communications between our court and the holy see." This offer of assistance was not a mere gesture. The Chargé d'Affaires and other French officials in the United States were always disposed to help their fellow-Catholics in every possible way. Dr. Guilday quotes ¹⁰ a certain Father Whelan's application for faculties dated January 28, 1785, which was sent to the Papal Nuncio with a letter of recommendation from Hector Saint-Jean de Crèveœur, then French Consul General in New York—the same who had applied to the Mayor of New York "comme Consul de France et comme François"—to obtain for Catholics a place of worship, when Roman Catholic worship was still proscribed in that city. The Irish priest pays this tribute to the Consul:

The French Consul Mr. St. John is a strenuous good friend to religion and advances our cause as much as possible and introduced me to the Marquis de La Fayette, who zealously recommended me to the Governor and Magistrates, and also engaged their protection in my behalf. His Excellency Monsieur de Marbois is arrived here which will be additional support to our cause.

The reasons alleged by the clergy in the memorial which they sent to Rome after the Whitemarsh meeting,¹¹ entreating His Holiness "not to persist in the design of conferring the episcopal dignity upon any individual in these parts, unless the necessary provision be made in some other quarter for his support," are strikingly similar to those given three months later, March 27, 1785,¹² by the French Chargé d'Affaires when he touched on the same question. The delegates maintained that, "The majority of the Protestant

¹⁰ Guilday, pp. 250-251. ¹² See Chapter III, Appendix No. 11, p. 90.

¹¹ Appendix No. 4, p. 148.

population here are averse to a Roman Catholic prelate, and for this reason the episcopal office if introduced would most likely awaken their jealousy against us." The other reasons, namely, the lack of means "to support a bishop in a manner becoming his station, and at the same time to supply the necessary wants of our fellow laborers in the ministry," and their inability to provide for the passing of a number of missionaries to this country, had been anticipated, as has been shown, by the Propaganda's offer of support for the bishop, its appeal to the generosity of the French King, and by Franklin's efforts to interest the government of France in the cause of the American missions.

None of the letters of the American Jesuits contains the least hint of their fear of coming under the jurisdiction of a French bishop; their great concern, like that of their English brethren, was to avoid, if possible, coming under the jurisdiction of the Propaganda, and this is made plain from a number of extracts from their correspondence at that period, of which some of the most significant will be quoted.

Writing to John Carroll, February 2, 1785, Charles Plowden stated his belief that Carroll's "nomination as prefect apostolic was hastened by Antonelli for fear the American clergy would exercise their right and elect a bishop over whom they [i. e. the Propaganda] would have no control."¹³ On the 17th of the same month, Carroll wrote a lengthy letter to Father Thorpe,¹⁴ which is perhaps the most revealing statement of the views then prevailing among the American clergy. He is anxious "to avoid giving the Congregation, or any other person the smallest reason to suspect a cabal to defeat their measures; and if plain and honest representation will not succeed with them, I should fear the effects of intemperate obstinacy." Nevertheless he states very candidly his objections to the Roman plan for government of the Church in America:

¹³ Guilday, p. 259.

¹⁴ Appendix No. 5, p. 149.

1) The American clergy conceive their situation no longer that of missionaries; they have become a national clergy and propose to see to the training of Catholic youth in a seminary. They are not in immediate want of a bishop, but when the time comes they "conceive that it will be more advantageous to Religion and less liable to give offence that he be an ordinary Bishop, and not a Vicar-Apostolic, and be chosen and presented to his Holiness by the American Cath[olic] clergy."

2) For two reasons they think it improper to be subject in their ecclesiastical government to the Propaganda: "the first is, that not being missionaries, we conceive ourselves, not a proper object of their institutions; and the second is, that tho' their free and tolerant forms of Government (in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania) admit us to equal civil rights with other Christians, yet the leading men in our respective States often expressed a jealousy of any foreign jurisdiction; and surely will be more offended about submitting to it in matters not essential to our faith." Carroll hopes "they will never object to our depending on the Pope in things purely spiritual," but he is sure "there are men, at least in this State [Maryland], who would blow up a flame of animosity against us, if they suspected that we were so much under the government of any Cong[regatio]n at Rome, as to receive our Superior from it, commissioned only during their good will; and that this Superior was restricted from employing any Clergyman here, but such as that Congregation should direct." He dreads "so much the consequences of its being known that this last direction was ever given, that I have not thought it proper to mention it to several of my Brethren."

It is enough to note in connection with this letter that by "foreign jurisdiction," Carroll and his confreres understand jurisdiction of the Propaganda, and that his reasons, like those stated in the memorial—"the jealousy of Protestant

Americans"—will be echoed a few weeks later, March 27th, by Barbé-Marbois, in his report to Vergennes.¹⁵ How deeply the newly appointed Prefect felt on this question may be divined from his letter to Charles Plowden.¹⁶ It is undated, and refers to the letter to Father Thorpe just analyzed:

Your sentiments concerning our rights as a national clergy coincide entirely with my own. I am so happy to find these sentiments adopted by our gentlemen here, I have written to Cardinal Antonelli, that the dependence of the Roman Catholics of this country on any foreign tribunal or office, as to their appointment of their ecclesiastical superior, will not be tolerated by our jealous governments; that if the clergy are not allowed to choose, and present for approbation, the person whom in their judgment they approve as best qualified, the consequences to religion may be fatal. I have written very fully to our common friend, Mr. Thorpe, on all these matters.

And a few days later, February 27th, in a letter to the Papal Nuncio in Paris,¹⁷ he insists that:

The Revolution from which we have just emerged has procured us this advantage, but the circumspection we are obliged to use is extreme, so that no pretext for interfering with our rights be given to those who hate us. This is especially necessary now, because the prejudice entertained for so long a time is deep-rooted. The opinion above all which many have formed that our faith exacted a subjection to His Holiness incompatible with the independence of a sovereign state, entirely false though it be, gives us continual worry.

Finally, in his letter of acceptance written February 27, 1785, to Cardinal Antonelli, Carroll develops the same idea:¹⁸

The Most Eminent Cardinal may rest assured that the greatest evils would be borne by us rather than to renounce the divine authority of the Holy See; that not only we priests who are here, but

¹⁵ See Chapter III, Appendix No. 11, p. 90.

¹⁶ Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 801.

¹⁷ Appendix No. 6, p. 153.

¹⁸ Guilday, pp. 219-222.

the Catholic people seem so firm in the faith that they will never withdraw from obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff. The Catholic body, however, think that some favor should be granted them by the Holy Father, necessary for their permanent enjoyment of the civil rights which they now enjoy, and to avert the dangers which they fear. From what I have said, and from the framework of public affairs here, your Eminence must see how objectionable all foreign jurisdiction will be to them. The Catholics therefore desire that no pretext be given to the enemies of our religion to accuse us of depending unnecessarily on a foreign authority; and that some plan may be adopted for this country, in such a way as to retain absolutely the spiritual jurisdiction of the Holy See, and at the same time remove all ground for objecting to us, as though we held anything hostile to the national independence. . . . The Holy Father will perhaps see more clearly what is to be done in this matter, if he considers the Sixth of the Articles of Perpetual Confederation between the States, which enacts that *no one who holds any office under the United States, shall be allowed to receive any gift, office or title of any kind whatsoever from any king, prince or foreign government*, and though this prohibition seems to extend only to those who are appointed to offices in the republic, it will perhaps be wrested by our opponents to apply also to ecclesiastical offices. We desire, therefore, Most Eminent Cardinal, to provide in every way, that the faith in its integrity, due obedience towards the Apostolic See and perfect union should flourish, and at the same time that whatever can with safety to religion be granted, shall be conceded to American Catholics in ecclesiastical government.

A comparison of this plea for a greater measure of independence of the nascent American Church with Barbé-Marbois' suggestion of March 27, 1785, that "the holy see is sure to extend [the progress of religion in the United States] by relaxing its jurisdiction as much as the good of the faith can permit," would almost lead to the belief that the French Chargé d'Affaires had read Carroll's letter, or had gone over the matter with the Prefect. He used the same arguments and expressed the same hope that in the character of the authority to be established and in the manner of choosing the subject on whom the authority would be con-

ferred, every precaution should be taken to avoid giving offense to the "jealousy" of the republican country. At any rate, it brings into a stronger light the truth of the thesis that whatever objection was raised by the American clergy against the Holy See's plan of reorganization of their Church, it was not occasioned by a fear of coming under the domination of France.

About a year later it is learned from a letter of Prefect Carroll to Charles Plowden dated July 11, 1786,¹⁹ that the Congregation had begun to relax its jurisdiction by according him latitude in the matter of employing any clergymen he liked, and of granting dispensations. He then refers to the subject he had so much at heart:

The nomination of a Bishop is suspended, till I shall please to say he might be serviceable; his appointment by a foreign tribunal is given up; and, whenever one is to be nominated, the clergy here may chuse two of their number, one of whom shall be Bishop.

and he speaks of employing the interval until a bishop is really needed, in obviating a danger—that of the final nomination to the bishopric being made by a "foreign jurisdiction."

In this manner was allayed the fear which had weighed so heavily on the minds of John Carroll and the Catholic clergy and laity of the United States: that their coming under the jurisdiction of the Roman Congregation of the Propaganda might arouse the animosity of their compatriots. The reader who has followed the account will doubtless share the conviction that American opposition to "foreign jurisdiction" was directed, not against France, but against the Roman Congregation. Not once did American priests or laymen express the fear that a French ecclesiastic might come and rule over them. Towards France, on the contrary, in the years following the signing of the peace, they felt the

¹⁹ Hughes, Vol. I, part 2, p. 635.

same friendship that had animated the citizens of the two countries during the hard years of the war. To her they turned confidently for cooperation, not only in transmitting the correspondence exchanged between them and the Cardinal Prefect or Paris Nuncio, but even to secure the fulfilment of their hope for the establishment of a truly national episcopate. A few lines from Father Thorpe's letter to John Carroll ²⁰ dated December 2, 1786, leave no doubt about it, and may serve as a summing up of the argument:

"My concern," writes the Roman Jesuit, "chiefly arose from the humour of Rome, or rather from the spirit of the Propaganda Congregation which does not easily acquiesce to have bishops in Ordinary established in new countries, unless it be influenced by some powerful court. Without such interest and also well supported, it will be in vain to attempt the obtaining of an Ordinary for North America. If the States would not directly employ their authority in this business they might perhaps suffer its being promoted by the French ministry."

²⁰ Guilday, p. 258.

APPENDICES TO CHAPTER V

1. Charles Plowden to John Carroll, September 2(?), 1784
2. John Carroll to Charles Plowden, September 15, 1784
3. Barbé-Marbois to John Carroll, October 27, 1784
4. Memorial to the Holy Father, November, 1784
5. John Carroll to Father Thorpe, February 17, 1785
6. John Carroll to the Nuncio, February 27, 1785

1. CHARLES FLOWDEN TO JOHN CARROLL.¹

[September 2, 1784]

Although I know you to be incapable of mistaking the right line of conduct upon this occasion, yet, I think it the part of a friend to send you whatever information I can obtain. My meaning is not to advise or instruct you, but only to enlarge your prospect. I must repeat that there are certainly some oblique views, most probably directed to the property of the American mission, and to the obtaining superiority over the missionaries. The note delivered to the nuncio proves their wish to exclude every Jesuit from trust or honor, and equally betrays the policy of the French ministry ("the nation most friendly to congress"), who, by bringing forward a Frenchman, or perhaps an Irish-Frenchman, would use religion as an instrument to increase their own influence in America. Our friend Thorpe's memorial, delivered to the pope, along with your petition, by Cardinal Borromeo, convinced the propaganda that the introduction of an alien would overthrow the mission; I wish you may quickly be turned into an ordinary from a bishop *in partibus*, and am persuaded the pope could not refuse you the powers, &c., if your election by your own clergy, were abetted by your provincial assembly. We wish you to be as free as the bishop of Quebec, or the new archbishop of Mohilow. I wish to know in what light the leading men in the states consider your appointment. If they are disposed to tolerate it surely they would be more willing to admit a bishop only dependent on the holy see, than one who must be subject to the prefect and secretary of a congregation. If they can be brought to relish such a prelate, it is but one step more: you want not talents or spirit to take it, and all difficulties are at once removed. The business has been hitherto treated at Paris, with uncommon secrecy, by the nuncio.

Mr. Thayer, who lives in Navarre college, wrote lately thus, to our friend Thorpe: "With respect to the views of Rome upon America, all that I can tell you is that there is a treaty on foot to establish a vicar apostolic for the thirteen states, which treaty, I suppose, is near conclusion. I know not what the Americans will think of this plan, whether they would fear a too great dependance on Rome. This I know, that many English priests whom I have the

¹ Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III (1844), pp. 376-377.

honor to know here, think that apostolic vicars are the ruin of Catholicity in England, and that bishops properly established, would be the fit instruments of building a solid edifice, both there and in America." Make your own comments, my dear friend, on this extract, substitute a less violent word to *ruin*, and we shall easily agree with the writer. He is noticed by the archbishop of Paris and other dignified clergymen of the greatest merit, and much commended by the superior of Navarre college, in whose house he lives gratis. He appears to be sincere, and zealous for the promotion of religion in America, and we hope he will not be misled, &c.

If your friends here were better informed of your concerns, they might occasionally yield you service. Upon the first rumor that a vicar apostolic was to be appointed, I prevailed upon Mr. Hoskins to write to Dr. Franklin to expose to him the degree of respect and consideration due to the missionaries now in America, and to desire that no proposals might be admitted without the participation and consent of you in particular, of the other missionaries, and the principal Catholic gentry in the country. At Mr. Thorpe's desire, the same has been written to him by Messrs. N. Sewell and Mattingly,² with other information relative to the origin and actual state of the American missions. Mr. Thorpe is all alive in your service; and wishes that his endeavors may be useful to the common cause, and approved by you. The Romans have got scent of your promotion, and according to their custom have strangely distorted the whole business, even your name. They bring in the French king to figure in it, and talk of congress and your provincial assemblies as if they were so many *conseils souverains* in France.

2. JOHN CARROLL TO CHARLES PLOWDEN.³

[September 15, 1784]

I do assure you, dear Charles, that nothing personal to myself, excepting the dissolution of the society, ever gave me so much concern; and if a meeting of our gentlemen, to be held the 9th of October, agree in thinking that I can decline the intended office without grievous inconvenience, I shall certainly do so. . . . To govern the spiritual concerns of this country as a mission is absurd, seeing there is a regular clergy belonging to it; and with God's

² Two ex-Jesuits, natives of Maryland, then in Europe.

³ Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III (1844), pp. 377-378.

assistance there will be in time a succession of ministry to supply their places as they drop off.

Nothing can place in a stronger light the aversion to the remains of the society, than the observation made by you of a negotiation being carried on, relative to the affairs of religion, with Dr. Franklin, without ever deigning to apply for information to the Catholic clergy in this country. You have my sincere thanks for all the zeal you exert and express in our concerns. Continue to do so, and God will be your reward. . . .

When I first heard that the nuncio was treating with my old friend, Dr. Franklin, I had thoughts of writing to him, and should certainly have done it, had I not been afraid of placing myself in a conspicuous point of view, and brought upon myself what I now find is come to pass. Had I received timely information, before congress sent their answer, I flatter myself it would have been even more satisfactory to us than the one which was sent, though a good one. My brother's triennium in congress had just expired; and Mr. Fitzsimmons, the only Catholic member beside, had just resigned; these were unfortunate circumstances.

3. BARBÉ-MARBOIS TO JOHN CARROLL.⁴

New York, October 27, 1784.

Sir:—I have the honor to transmit to you a letter which I have received with the despatches of M. le Comte de Vergennes. I judge by the address of that letter that his holiness has concluded his choice in regard to the head of the Catholic church on this continent. I congratulate myself in being one of the first to assure you that this choice will give general satisfaction. I am about to set out for Trenton, and desire earnestly that Maryland may be represented in congress by one of your relations. If your nomination should produce any other communications between our court and the holy see, I will exert myself to contribute to your service. I am with respect, M. l'Abbé,

Your very humble and very

Obedient servant,

DE MARBOIS.

To Rev. John Carroll.

⁴ Bernard U. Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III (1844), p. 794.

4. MEMORIAL TO THE HOLY FATHER.⁵

[November, 1784]

Most Holy Father:

Of the twenty-two secular priests living in the thirteen United States of North America, six were appointed a few months ago to deliberate together upon the welfare of the Catholics in this part of the world. Having assembled for this purpose, they expressed the opinion that there is not the least necessity for a bishop in this country, because there is no institution as yet for the education of youth, and their subsequent preparation for holy orders. I, Bernard Diderick, have been requested by the committee to notify your holiness of this sentiment, and to acquaint you also with the following circumstances:

1. The majority of the Protestant population here are averse to a Roman Catholic prelate, and for this reason the episcopal office if introduced would most likely awaken their jealousy against us.

2. We are not able to support a bishop in a manner becoming his station, and at the same time to supply the necessary wants of our fellow laborers in the ministry; moreover, the Catholics cannot be induced to aid us with their means in effecting this object.

3. Were it even admitted that the two points just mentioned would present no difficulty, we are entirely at a loss to see how the greater number of missionaries, whose coöperation would be so very desirable in this immense region, could be furnished with the means of passing to this country.

We therefore humbly entreat Your Holiness not to persist in the design of conferring the episcopal dignity upon any individual in these parts, unless the necessary provision be made in some other quarter for his support. Should Your Holiness entertain a different view, it would be a source of much affliction to us, while at the same time we are convinced that it will be much more detrimental than otherwise to the interest of religion; for as it has pleased Your Holiness to appoint one of our body to administer confirmation, consecrate altar-stones, bless the holy oils, and grant dispensations in the prohibited degrees, this appointment is equally advantageous for the good of religion.

⁵ Guilday, p. 176.

5. JOHN CARROLL TO FATHER THORPE ⁶

Maryland, near Georgetown, Feb. 17, 1785.

The official information of the advices sent by you June 9th, 1784, was only received Nov. 26th. I did myself the honour of writing to you on the subject, immediately after receiving your letter, which was about the 20th of August, and of thanking you most cordially for your active and successful endeavours to render service to this country. I say successful, not because your partiality, as I presume, joined to that of my old and cheerful friend Dr. Franklin suggested me to the consideration of his Holiness; but because you have obtained some form of spiritual government to be adopted for us. It is not indeed quite such as we wish; and it cannot continue long in its present form. You well know, that in our free and jealous government, where Catholics are admitted into all public councils equally with the professors of any other Religion, it will never be suffered that their Ecclesiastical Superior (be he a Bishop or Prefect-Apostolic), receive his appointment from a foreign State, and only hold it at the discretion of a foreign tribunal or congregation. If even the present temper, or inattention of our Executive and legislative bodies were to overlook it for this and perhaps a few more instances, still ought we not to acquiesce and rest quiet in actual enjoyment; for the consequence, sooner or later, would certainly be, that some malicious or jealous-minded person would raise a spirit against us, and under pretence of rescuing the State from foreign influence and dependence, strip us perhaps of our common civil rights. For these reasons, every thinking man amongst us is convinced, that we neither must request or admit any other foreign interference than such, as being essential to our religion, is implied in the acknowledgment of the Bishop of Rome, by divine appointment, head of the universal Church; and the See of St. Peter being the centre of ecclesiastical unity.

I am well aware that these suggestions will sound ungrateful at Rome, and that the mention of them from us will be perhaps imputed by some of the officers of the propaganda to a remaining spirit of Jesuitism; but I own to you, that tho' I wish to treat with them upon terms of sincere unanimity and cordial concurrence in all matters tending to the service of Religion, yet I do not feel myself

⁶ Guilday, pp. 208-212.

disposed to sacrifice to the fear of giving offence the permanent interests of Religion. I mean candidly and respectfully to state our present situation; the spirit of our people; and the sentiments of the R. Catholics, the principal of whom are ready and desirous to transmit to Rome their opinion on the probable consequences of such a spiritual government, as is laid down in my dispatches from yr city. Whether I shall transmit their opinion under their own signature, I am yet uncertain; I would wish to avoid giving the Congregation, or any other person the smallest reason to suspect a cabal to defeat their measures; and if plain and honest representation will not succeed with them, I should fear the effects of intemperate obstinacy.

That you may judge of these matters yourself, I must inform you, that my dispatches contained, 1st the decree of the Congn. of the Propgda., appointing me Superior of the Missions in the Thirteen U. States, *ad suum beneplacitum . . . cum auctoræ ea exercendi, quæ ad earundem Missionum regimen pertinent, ad proscriptum decretorum sacrae Congnis, et facultatum eidem [mihi] concessarum et non alias nec alio modo.* 2-ly. An order from his Holiness, empowering me to administer Confirmation. 3-ly. A letter from Cardl. Antonelli, advising that His Holiness has extended to these States the Jubilee of 1776. 4-ly. Another letter from him and one likewise from the Nuncio at Paris, desiring me to send two youths to be educated in the College of the Propgda. 5-ly. In the same letter Cardl. Antonelli wishes to know the number of our Clergy, and the amount of their incomes: for tho' the Congregation means not to meddle in temporalibus, yet conceiving and believing there are Church possessions here, it is proper for them to know how many Clergymen can be maintained from them. 6-ly. He further informs that his Holiness means hereafter to appoint a Bishop Vicar-apostolic; but neither insinuates when or whom. 7-ly. In the faculties sent me, which with respect to matrimonial dispensations, are too much restricted, for our exigencies, I am particularly charged to grant no powers or faculties to any who may come into this country, but those quos sacra Congregao. destinaverit et approbaverit. Thus you see the outlines of our future Ecclesiastical government, as it is planned at Rome.

Our objections to it are—1st. We conceive our situation no longer as that of missionaries; and the Ecclesiastical constitution here no longer as that of a mission. By acquiring civil and religious

rights in common with other Christians, we are become a national Catholic Clergy; Colleges are now erecting for giving general and liberal education; these Colleges are open, both to masters and scholars of every religious denomination; and as we have every reason to believe, that amongst the youth trained in these different Colleges, there will be frequently some inclined to the Ecclesiastical State, we Catholics propose instituting a Seminary to form them to the virtues of their future state, and to instruct them in Divinity. Thus we shall in a few years, with the blessing of providence, be able to supply this country with labourers in the Lord's vineyard, and keep up a succession, if we are indulged in a Bishop. We are not in immediate want of one, and it will be more agreeable to many of my Brethren not to have any yet appointed; but whenever the time for it comes, we conceive that it will be more advantageous to Religion and less liable to give offence that he be an ordinary Bishop, and not a Vicar-Apostolic, and be chosen and presented to his Holiness by the American Cath. Clergy. 2-ly. For two reasons we think it improper to be subject in our Ecclesiastical government to the Propaganda: the first is, that not being missionaries, we conceive ourselves, not a proper object of their institutions; and the second is, that tho' our free and tolerant forms of Government (in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania) admit us to equal civil rights with other Christians, yet the leading men in our respective States often express a jealousy of any foreign jurisdiction; and surely will be more offended about submitting to it in matters not essential to our faith. I hope they will never object to our depending on the Pope in things purely spiritual but I am sure there are men, at least in this State, who would blow up a flame of animosity against us, if they suspected that we were to be so much under the government of any Congn. at Rome, as to receive our Superior from it, commissioned only during their good will; and that this Superior was restricted from employing any Clergyman here, but such as that Congregation should direct. I dread so much the consequences of its being known that this last direction was ever given, that I have not thought it proper to mention it to several of my Brethren.

With respect to sending two youths, I shall inform Propaganda that it would surely be very acceptable to have children educated gratis in so religious a seminary; and very acceptable to us all to have a succession of ministers of the altar thus provided for: but, as I suppose, they will not receive any into their College, but such

as shall afterwards be subject to their government; and it being yet uncertain what effect my representations may produce, I shall delay that measure till further information.

I shall in the meantime request permission to give faculties to other Clergymen, than those sent by the Propgda., of whose virtue and talents I shall have sufficient documents. For want of this power, the Catholics in the Jerseys, N. Y., the great Western Country, bordering on the lakes, and the Ohio, Wabash, and Mississippi (to say nothing of many in the N. England States and Carolinas) are entirely destitute of spiritual succours. The Catholics in some of these Settlements, have been at the expense of paying the passage of some Irish Franciscans, providing for their subsistence, and in erecting places of worship. These men have brought good testimonials; but I am precluded from giving them any spiritual powers.

I should deem it a singular happiness to have an opportunity of conferring with a person of your experience of the air of Rome, before these representations are given in. But our distance is so great, that I must act according to the best of my own and Brethren's judgment, and commit all I can to your prudent management. At a meeting of some of us last autumn, it was ordered that £ 20-0-0 should be remitted to you as a feeble acknowledgement of our sense of your services and to defray your expence of attendance, etc. Mr. Ashton, who is chosen to be our Manager general, either has or soon will transmit the necessary orders for it. Tho', since my late appointment, I do not intermeddle in our temporal concerns, yet I shall not fail to suggest the propriety of fixing on you, as our agent, a permanent salary: it will be proportioned, not to your zeal and services, but to our poor ability. At the same meeting, but after I had left it thro' indisposition, a direction was given to Messrs. Diderick, Mosely, and Matthews to write you a letter (I believe likewise a Memorial to the Pope) against the appointment of a Bishop. I hear that this has displeased many of those absent from the meeting, and that it is not certain, whether the measure is to be carried into execution. Mr. Diderick has shown me a copy of his intended letter to you, of his Memorial, and of a letter to Cardl. Borromeo. He has no other introduction to write to this worthy Cardinal than the information communicated to me by our common friend Plowden, of his great worth and friendly disposition to you. I made objections to some parts of his letters; and I cannot tell as I mentioned before whether they will be sent. It is matter of surprise to

me that he was nominated to the commission of Three; he is truly a zealous, painstaking Clergyman; but not sufficiently prudent, and conversant in the world, or capable of conducting such a business with the circumspection necessary to be used by us towards our own Government, and the Congn. of the Propaganda.

My long letter must have tired you. But it has been so earnestly recommended to me to give you very minute intelligence, that I have ventured to trespass on your patience. I have two things more to request: 1st. that you would please to present us all, and myself in particular, to Cardl. Borromeo, as penetrated with a lively sense of his virtue, and earnestly suing for his good offices to the service of Religion in this Country, wherever they can be usefully employed. 2-ly. that you would let Mr. Thayer know (for I hear from Plowden that he is at Paris, and corresponds with you) that I shall be happy in being favoured with an epistolary intercourse with him: and in confidence of your introduction, I shall probably write to him before I have your answer.

The little leisure I have lately had, has been taken up in writing and publishing an answer to Wharton's pamphlet, which was held up as unanswerable by our adversaries, whom the elegance of his language, and their ignorance in Religious controversy equally contributed to deceive. I have desired Mr. Talbot to transmit you a copy by the first opportunity. I doubt, I have not made my court to a certain party at Rome by my note on the destruction of the Society. Be pleased to charge with us all postage and other expences on our acct. A credit shall be placed in England for discharging them.

With perfect esteem,

I have the honour to be, Dr. Sir,

Mr. Thorpe:

etc. etc.

6. JOHN CARROLL TO THE NUNCIO.⁷

[February 27, 1785]⁸

Your Excellency will understand the delicacy of my position, by recalling the jealousy of our government towards all jurisdiction of a foreign kind, a jealousy which heretofore has led to the exclusion

⁷ Guilday, p. 237.

⁸ This is the date given by Gilmary Shea, p. 261.

of Catholics from any share in the civil administration of several of our States. Catholics are indeed tolerated everywhere to-day, but so far, it is only in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, that they enjoy equal advantages with their fellow-citizens. The Revolution from which we have just emerged has procured us this advantage, but the circumspection we are obliged to use is extreme, so that no pretext for interfering with our rights be given to those who hate us. This is especially necessary now, because the prejudice entertained for so long a time is deep-rooted. The opinion above all which many have formed that our faith exacted a subjection to His Holiness incompatible with the independence of a sovereign state, entirely false though it be, gives us continual worry. To dissipate this prejudice time will be our best aid, as also will Divine Providence, and the experience of our fellow-citizens in our devotion to our country and to its independence. The wisdom of the Holy See will not fail us in this difficult matter. Your Excellency can rest assured that the Apostolic Chair does not possess in the world children more devoted to its doctrines and more penetrated with respect for all its decisions.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MYTH OF FRENCH INTERFERENCE

The documents upon which this account of the rôle of France in the early stages of the negotiation leading to the establishment of the American hierarchy has been based reveal the highmindedness of the French statesmen and ecclesiastics called upon by representatives of the Holy See in its efforts to secure both educational facilities and financial support for the young Church; but inasmuch as a comparison of the interpretations of this attitude by Church historians shows a sharp contrast between the earlier and later versions of the event, the last pages of this study will be devoted to a brief survey of the six main authors dealing with this problem, namely, Bernard U. Campbell, Henry de Courcy, John Gilmary Shea, Thomas O'Gorman, Thomas Campbell and Dr. Peter Guilday.

A. BERNARD U. CAMPBELL (1844)

When he wrote his *Memoirs of the Life and Times of the Most Reverend John Carroll*, Campbell had at his disposal only the Baltimore Cathedral archives in which the correspondence of Archbishop Carroll had been preserved, the account of the Whitemarsh meetings, the text of the Nuncio's note to Franklin with the answer thereto by Congress, and a few entries in Franklin's journal. None of the letters between the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda and the Paris Nuncio, or between the Comte de Vergennes and the French Minister in the United States could have come to his knowledge, as they were buried in the Roman and Paris archives.

Although he had not perused the documents which have since come to light, this author shows a perfect understanding of the complex factors of the negotiation, of the Holy

See's concern with the future of Catholicism in the United States on the one hand and, on the other, of the natural anxiety of the American Jesuits to safeguard the means of restoring their society, and of the hesitation of American Catholics to permit the establishment of a hierarchy in the United States. While they entertained an intense loyalty to the Holy Father as their spiritual leader, and to the Roman Congregation which embodied his authority, American Catholics could not forget that the Pope was also a temporal ruler, and they dreaded even an appearance of foreign meddling which might offend the susceptibilities of Congress: ¹

However well intended by the holy see, the proposition to appoint a bishop was not favorably received by the clergy of Maryland, who, having obtained the first information of it, through the proceedings in Congress, were not prepared to appreciate the liberal views and enlightened policy of the pope. . . . It was apprehended by some, that a Vicar Apostolic would be too much under the control of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide.

He displays keen psychological acumen in defining the grounds of opposition shown to the Roman project by the English Jesuits, particularly by Charles Plowden: ²

The negotiations for appointing a vicar apostolic having been carried on in France, caused the measure to be regarded with suspicion by the English Jesuits, who, notwithstanding the harsh treatment received at home, always testified their loyalty by remaining staunch Englishmen in all other countries, even in their national and hereditary opposition to French politics.

and he disposes of their uneasiness in the following terms: ³

That their fears were groundless and their suspicions of improper influence in the affairs of the American Church unjust, will appear conclusively from the frank and liberal conduct of the Holy See in its first measures [as well] as from the deference uniformly paid

¹ Campbell, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 375.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

to the sentiments of the American Government and people, and to the wishes of the clergy, as soon as they were understood.

As for France, Campbell writes in warm terms of the blessings of the Franco-American alliance, of the examples of religious devotion given by French army and naval officers, and of the activity of the French chaplains: ⁴

The alliance with France, however, and the aid of her Catholic armies to the cause of American independence, dissipated some of the mists of prejudice, and when the French fleet approached Rhode Island, the laws against Catholics were repealed. When those who had been so far the dupes of misrepresentation and intolerance, as to believe that Catholics were as ignorant and debased as their calumniators had represented them to be—beheld the accomplished and respectable officers of the French army and navy, and the gallant Kosciusko, Pulaski, etc., piously engaged in the most solemn exercises of the Catholic religion, they learned to respect what they had before scoffed at. The French regiments and ships were accompanied by priests and chaplains, and, in the march through the country, Catholic worship was frequently performed in the meeting houses of other Christian denominations.

B. DE COURCY-SHEA (1856)

Henry de Courcy's historical sketch on *The Catholic Church in the United States* was written originally in French for the *Ami de la religion* and *l'Univers*. John Gilmary Shea translated and presented it to his Catholic compatriots in the columns of the *Leader*. This publication, writes Shea in his Preface to the second edition, "elicited the highest commendation from the Catholic clergy and the Catholic press," though vague charges were made against the author's motives and honesty, of which the translator says: "Launched forth in accents of passion and wrath, [they] so betray their source, that it would be folly to regard them," and he adds that "the accuracy of the work is admitted."

De Courcy's account of the steps taken for the erection of

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

an episcopal see (Chapter V), is brief and based upon Campbell's more elaborate story. If his appreciation of the attitude of Rome towards the American Church, and of the French cooperation is here quoted, it is because it was fully endorsed, as has been seen, by his friend and translator, Gilmary Shea, who was later to change his own views: ⁵

Franklin communicated to Congress the projects of the Court of Rome, and received an answer to the effect that the Federal government had no opinion to express on a question not in its jurisdiction. Religious affairs were under the control of the several States. This was at least showing the absence of all opposition to a Catholic hierarchy; and if Protestant fanaticism did not attempt to excite the people and irritate religious passions, it was because France was too necessary an ally to permit any insult to the religious feelings of Louis XVI. That monarch, it was known, took a lively interest in the spread of Catholicity in America, and France may thus claim the glory of having given its powerful aid to the Holy See in founding the American Episcopate.

We have gone at some length into these little known negotiations, because we know nothing better fitted to inspire confidence and esteem for the tutelary authority of the Sovereign Pontificate. The Maryland missionaries believed it to be for the interest of religion that the United States should be erected into a Church independent of England. Rome anticipates their desires, and her paternal solicitude, inspired by the Holy Ghost, discovers the wants of remote churches, even before the latter express them. The missionaries fear lest some hostile influence should disregard their rights or compromise the fruit of their labors. The Holy See kindly hears their representations, well founded at times, and far from being swayed by any party, religious or political, tries above all to secure the permanent interests of religion in a country whose government, laws, and institutions, so different from those of Europe, were then but imperfectly understood. Hence the prudent precaution to obtain the approval, or at least the neutrality of Congress, and the eagerness to choose a person named by the representative of the United States in Paris. The Maryland clergy desire that the Superior should be taken from among them, and Rome at once conceded it. They see no immediate opportunity for the appointment

⁵ De Courcy-Shea, 2nd ed., pp. 61-62.

of a bishop. Rome consents to postpone its projects, the wisdom of which is now so palpable, inasmuch as the great progress of religion in the United States can, as all admit, be attributed only to the foundation of the Episcopate. But when the missionaries see that Rome is unchangeable, they represent that, in order not to excite fanaticism, the creation of a titular bishop, enjoying all his rights, would suit America better than a Vicar-Apostolic, whose immediate dependency on the Congregation "de propaganda fide" would seem to constitute a sort of religious servitude. The Holy See welcomed this, too, and thus this question of titular bishops, which has been so misunderstood in England, and considered by the partisans of the established Church as augmenting the direct authority of the See of Rome, this question, more justly appreciated in America, was presented as a means of reconciling nice republican susceptibilities to the foundation of a Catholic hierarchy.

C. JOHN GILMARY SHEA (1888)

In preparing his *Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll*, John Gilmary Shea was better documented than his predecessors. A few years before, George Bancroft had published in the Appendix to Volume I of his *History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States of America*, a large selection of the French diplomatic correspondence of that period and particularly the two letters of Barbé-Marbois dealing with the problem of the reorganization of the Catholic missions in the United States, and Shea had undertaken the task of copying both in Paris and in Rome, documents pertaining to the early history of the Church in America. He translated and used many of these Propaganda Transcripts which are now preserved in the Georgetown University archives. However, if the gathering of material is of prime importance, of no less importance is the dispassionate and objective interpretation of the documents. In his foreword to the "Documents relative to the Adjustment of the Roman Catholic Organization in the United States to the conditions of National Independence, 1783-1784," Carl Russell Fish refers to John Gilmary Shea

in the following terms: "Dr. Shea seems to exaggerate the maliciousness of the French government, not entirely escaping that animus which influences nearly all writing on the subject, on whichever side."⁶

It would be an interesting problem of psychology to attempt to determine the reasons which led John Gilmary Shea to depart from the position taken by Bernard U. Campbell and accepted by himself in his American edition of De Courcy's work, and to denounce as a scheme (pp. 212, 215, 220), an intrigue (pp. 213, 215, 217, 219), and a conspiracy (p. 215), a negotiation viewed by the earlier historian as perfectly honorable. Should we recall his novitiate in the Society of Jesus to explain his ardor in exculpating all the old Maryland Jesuits from every suspicion of the least lack of sympathy for the cause of the American Revolution and of the least opposition to the plans of the Holy See for the religious reconstruction of North America after six long years of war and turmoil? Is there more than a coincidence between the tone he takes against France and French statesmen and ecclesiastics (pp. 215, 219, 220, 266) and the anti-Jesuit policy of the French government in the years preceding the publication of his biography of John Carroll? Or was he roused by Bancroft's denunciation of the "rancor of the Jesuits" and by the same author's conception of the rôle of Franklin? Here are the words of Bancroft:⁷

The rancor of the Jesuits against the house of Bourbon for exiling them from France and Spain was relentless. The Roman Catholic clergy in the insurgent British colonies had been superintended by a person who resided in London; and during the war they were directed by Jesuits who favored the British. The influences which in South America led to most disastrous results for Spain were of little consequence in the United States. It was Franklin's desire to do away with this influence unfriendly to France. The Roman see

⁶ *American Historical Review*, July, 1910, p. 801 note.

⁷ Bancroft, p. 225.

proceeded with caution; and a letter from its nuncio at Paris, on the appointment of a bishop in the United States, was communicated to congress. In May, 1786, [sic] they, in reply, expressed a readiness to testify respect to the sovereign and the state represented by the nuncio, but disavowing jurisdiction over a purely spiritual subject, referred him to the several states individually.

Whatever may have caused that animus, it colored the view taken of the whole negotiation by our historian. First he denounces the "scheme" formed apparently in the French embassy at Philadelphia to impose on American Catholics a French bishop residing in Europe. "What a scheme," he comments in a footnote (p. 218) "for the enslavement of Catholics in this country." Then (p. 219 note) he designates Barbé-Marbois as author of the scheme: "It seems to me from a study of the whole matter that it was simply a petty intrigue of Barbé-Marbois to effect the nomination of some French priest to the projected vicariate."

To enable the reader, who has already read Barbé-Marbois' correspondence, to decide for himself the justice of this charge, the passage in which Shea produces what he considers to be the evidence of the French "conspiracy" is here given. After quoting Franklin's letter to Vergennes (December 15, 1783) urging the French statesman to agree to the appointment of a French bishop, Gilmary Shea comments (p. 215):

But for this positive evidence we could scarcely believe that Dr. Franklin lent himself to a plan for treating his Catholic countrymen in this manner and helping a conspiracy to subject them not to a superior chosen from among them, but to one nominated by the French Court and residing in France. . . . A letter of Barbé-Marbois, French minister to the United States, indicates that the whole scheme originated with him; it represents the Catholics in America as having been directed by the Jesuits who favored the British, and speaks of the rancor of the Jesuits against the House of Bourbons.

He adds in a footnote:

This is Bancroft's rendering of Marbois who wrote: "The Catholics always directed by the Jesuits in this country, have been ill-disposed to the Revolution; they are not better disposed towards us." "La Révolution" does not mean the American Revolution at all, but the Voltairean ideas of the day, and he makes it mean "favored the British" shows . . . [*Sentence incomplete*]. It is inconceivable how Mr. Bancroft could have adopted this silly and mendacious nonsense for history and used it to malign his own countrymen.

Barbé-Marbois' letter and the use Gilmary Shea makes of it deserve the closest examination, for it is the only positive evidence the author adduces in support of his imputation. The reader will notice that, even if the original was not before Shea, the portion translated by Bancroft gave him the greatest part of it, and the part which has a real import. Gilmary Shea quotes from that translation, discusses it, and no critic could therefore plead ignorance on his behalf of this capital document. It will also be observed that he quotes only one sentence of the letter, omitting three points of the utmost importance in it: (a) the tribute paid to Charles Carroll, (b) the adverse opinion regarding the advisability of appointing a French bishop, and (c) the recommendation of John Carroll for that position. One is therefore at a loss to discover the reason for these strange omissions, unless it was that the author was so riled by Barbé-Marbois' aspersions on American Catholics, and particularly on the Jesuits, that he failed to grasp the intent of the letter.

To examine carefully Shea's presentation of his case against the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, in the first place, he assumes that he was a partisan of the French Revolution (actually, he was anything but a revolutionist),⁸ and in the

⁸ Barbé-Marbois served as Consul General in the United States, and *Chargé d'Affaires* after the departure of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, in June, 1784; he became "Intendant" for Santo Domingo and returned to France in 1789. After election to the "Conseil des Anciens" in 1796, he was accused of opposition to the régime, and was arrested and deported, 1797-1799. He held financial offices under Napoleon, and after the Bourbon Restoration became Minister of Justice, 1815-1816.

next place Shea does not seem to have a correct idea of the real position of the French representative. He calls him "French Minister to the United States." That post was held, up to June 1784—the very month of Carroll's appointment—by the Chevalier de la Luzerne, and not until then did Barbé-Marbois become *Chargé d'Affaires*. In the latter capacity he received the communications sent by the Nuncio to the French minister to the United States, May 12, 1784, transmitted to Charles Carroll the letter directed "to the oldest American missionary," and to John Carroll, shortly thereafter, the decree appointing him *Prefect-Apostolic*. Of his two letters to Vergennes, the first dated August 15, 1784, is the one on which Shea bases his charge; the second, dated March 27, 1785, contains the report and recommendations requested by the Paris Nuncio on May 12, 1784. This will be given later.

A priori the probability of Barbé-Marbois' meddling in this affair is of the slightest. It is not the custom of career diplomats to consult with consular agents regarding political business, and moreover, the documents at hand do not permit the belief that the first intimation of the project of appointing a French bishop came to Barbé-Marbois before the arrival of the letters of May 12, 1784, when the matter had already been settled in Rome by John Carroll's appointment. The only reference to be found before that time in la Luzerne's correspondence is of January 31, 1784, and deals with the Nuncio's note to Franklin which had been transmitted to Congress. It is sufficient, however, to read Barbé-Marbois' whole letter of August 15, 1784, to see what would have been his attitude had he been given an opportunity to play a leading part in the matter, for, as already stated, the very document from which Gilmary Shea extracts the few lines he finds so incriminating is otherwise entirely devoted to the discouragement of the plan of appointing a French

bishop, and ends with the recommendation that John Carroll be chosen ecclesiastical superior of the American missions.

Shea misinterprets even the words he quotes. Barbé-Marbois had written: "The Catholics always directed by the Jesuits in this country have been ill-disposed to the Revolution; they are not much better disposed towards us." An unprejudiced reader would not hesitate to understand the "Revolution" of which he writes in 1784, as being the American Revolution which had just ended, and the words "towards us" as referring, not to the House of Bourbon, but to France and the French. Not so Shea, who must at all cost vindicate the loyalty of each and every American Catholic, priest and layman, in the cause of American independence. "Revolution" for him, therefore, means the "Voltairean ideas of the day"—a perfect anachronism. Who ever dreamt of the upheaval of 1789 in 1784, when France was at peace and recovering her former prestige? Nineteenth century writers searching the deep causes of that political convulsion may have found them in "Voltairean ideas," but no Frenchman, and above all no official writing a diplomatic letter could have thought of using the term "Revolution" to designate current philosophical ideas. Neither is the "towards us" more intelligently taken to mean "the House of Bourbon," for the King alone, not his minister, nor a mere *Chargé d'Affaires*, could have identified himself with the Royal House.

But this is not the worst. Shea is not satisfied with leaving his readers under the impression that Barbé-Marbois misrepresented the attitude of the American Catholics towards the Revolution; he accuses him of "impeaching the loyalty of the Carrolls and other patriotic American Catholics, priests and laymen."⁹ There is no doubt that Barbé-Marbois expressed his persuasion regarding the attitude of the

⁹ "Franklin . . . must have felt not a little chagrined to find himself made even indirectly the medium of impeaching the loyalty of the Carrolls and other patriotic American Catholics, priests and laymen." (p. 218).

majority of them. He was right or he was wrong, and in what measure it is difficult to determine; but one thing he can not be accused of, and that is of having "impeached the loyalty of the Carrolls," for the whole letter from which Shea quotes one sentence is a glowing tribute to the patriotic devotion of that family, which is, he informs his chief, a conspicuous exception to the attitude he found among others—so much so that he sent Charles Carroll the letter for transmission to "the oldest American missionary." Furthermore, he expressed the hope that "the Abbé Carroll" might be chosen ecclesiastical superior of the American missions.

Had Barbé-Marbois ever entertained the idea of seeing a French bishop appointed to rule over the young American Church? Did he, as Shea believes, originate the plan to be examined in Paris and in Rome and given up only in face of the opposition of American Catholics? If the letter already quoted has not yet convinced the reader of the injustice of the charge, his attention is invited to the other letter addressed by Barbé-Marbois to the Comte de Vergennes. The fact that it was written March 27, 1785, long after the *fait accompli* of Carroll's appointment as Prefect and his promised bishopric, might make one think that it can not affect the question of the negotiations concluded the year before. It should be remembered, however, that it is the official reply of the French Chargé d'Affaires to a communication addressed to la Luzerne, his predecessor, May 12, 1784, by the Nuncio in the name of the Prefect of Propaganda on the very issue of the establishment of an American hierarchy, and there is no reason to believe that in a confidential letter written in code Barbé-Marbois expressed other than his own real view of the situation.

It is for the reader to determine whether the author of these remarkable documents was a "schemer" or a sane and honorable gentleman who did, indeed, have at heart the interest of his country, but who also had at heart the welfare

of the Church and of the new Republic; and the reader will doubtless absolve Barbé-Marbois of this groundless charge brought against him by John Gilmary Shea.

D. THOMAS O'GORMAN (1895) AND
THOMAS CAMPBELL (1899)

Dr. O'Gorman's *History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States* is a brief compendium which may be taken as a faithful mirror of Catholic thought in the years following the publication of Gilmary Shea's works.¹⁰ The author complacently accepts Shea's version of the negotiations of 1783-84 and echoes his denunciation of the "French intrigue":¹¹

Franklin at that time represented the United States in Paris, and Prince Pamphilio Doria, Archbishop of Seleucia, was the papal nuncio there. The latter was approached on the subject of the American project [Petition for the appointment of Fr. Lewis as superior of the clergy], and wrote to Franklin that it was a matter that ought to be arranged between Congress and the French king, and that a Frenchman residing in Paris ought to be chosen the ecclesiastical superior of the colonies. This scheme, it appears, had been hatched in the French embassy at Philadelphia. It meant the de-Americanizing of the church in the United States at its very birth, and making it a dependency of the church in France. That country had rendered us political services, and was about to render us religious services for which we cannot be too grateful, but not at the cost of our ecclesiastical independence. Franklin for a moment forgot his American spirit, fell in with the scheme, wrote the prime minister of France, Count de Vergennes, in the sense of the nuncio's note, and then referred the matter to the Continental Congress. . . . It was not long before the intrigue came to the knowledge of European clergymen, former associates in the Society of Jesus of the Maryland Jesuits, and of Carroll. They hastened to

¹⁰ This volume was prepared by Dr. O'Gorman when he was Professor of Church History in the Catholic University of America, and was published in the "American Church History Series," under the auspices of the American Society of Church History.

¹¹ Pp. 261-262.

open the eyes of Franklin to the dishonor thus inflicted on the American clergy, and especially on Carroll, whom he knew well; for the intrigue implied, and Marbois, the French minister in New York, had plainly enough asserted, that the American priests were not worthy of trust, and had no one among them to fit to guide the American church. Franklin saw at once his mistake, and thenceforward exerted his influence in an unofficial way for the nomination of Carroll. At any rate, what between the refusal of Congress to touch the matter and Franklin's refusal to go on with it, the French scheme fell through.

It is a matter of wonder how a serious author could gather in two short paragraphs so many erroneous statements. Without dwelling on unimportant points, such as calling the Nuncio Pamphilio Doria instead of Doria Pamphili, and making Barbé-Marbois French minister in New York, attention may be called to some of the most glaring misstatements of fact of which O'Gorman is guilty.

He assumes that the American project, as he calls it, was brought to the attention of the Nuncio and prompted him to bring the matter to Franklin, whereas it has been shown that all his dealings with the American minister were by order of the Prefect of the Propaganda. He charges the Nuncio with having written Franklin that "it was a matter that ought to be arranged between Congress and the French king, and that a Frenchman residing in Paris ought to be chosen the ecclesiastical superior of the colonies." The first statement is a pure invention, as not a word of the Nuncio's correspondence can receive such a construction; and the second repeats Shea's error in attributing to the Papal representative a plan first suggested to him by Franklin himself. He represents Franklin as writing to Vergennes in the sense of the Nuncio's note, and then referring the matter to Congress, whereas the note transmitted to Congress merely inquired, as has been seen, whether any objection would be raised to establishing "in some city of the United States of North America, one of their Catholic subjects, with the

powers of Apostolic Vicar, and the character of Bishop," and Franklin's letter to Vergennes, dated four months after the Nuncio's note, urged a project very near the heart of the American minister. O'Gorman goes even further than Gilmary Shea and imputes to Barbé-Marbois the assertion that "the American priests were not worthy of trust, and had no one among them fit to guide the American church." A perusal of the two letters of Barbé-Marbois and a recollection that he expressed a hope of seeing the "Abbé Carroll" raised to the episcopal see, will permit an estimate of this charge.

* * *

"The Beginnings of the Hierarchy in the United States," by Thomas Campbell, S. J., was a paper contributed to the *Historical Records and Studies* of the United States Catholic Historical Society.¹² Like Dr. O'Gorman, the author accepts without qualification Gilmary Shea's version of the Paris negotiation and launches into a bitter tirade against Barbé-Marbois:¹³

The French Ambassador at Philadelphia was M. Barbé Marbois. He, of his own accord, and probably to advance the interests of some ambitious ecclesiastical friend, began negotiations with Benjamin Franklin and the Apostolic Nuncio at Paris for the appointment of a bishop for the United States. Marbois was the individual who had maligned all the Catholics of this country, clergy and laity alike, by saying in his official reports that under the guidance of the Jesuits they had been strong adherents of the English, and bitterly averse to the Revolution—a calumny which Bancroft has repeated. . . . This scheming politician, who thus publicly and officially endeavored to fix the stigma of disloyalty upon his fellow Catholics and who, according to Shea, reproached the Jesuits of this country with not favouring the Voltairean ideas of the day, urged Benjamin Franklin, who was then ambassador at Paris, to secure the nomination of a French subject who should reside in France and administer from there the ecclesiastical affairs of the United States.

¹² Vol. I (1899), pp. 251-277.

¹³ Pp. 271-273.

It was stipulated that he was to be acceptable to Congress. Franklin took up the scheme ardently, communicated it to the American Congress, which, however, threw the matter out as not of its concern, and probably also because there was not a man there who had any other feeling than that of dislike, if not hatred, for everything connected with catholicity.

Consider what a deplorable condition of affairs that was. A scheming, self-seeking French politician, a presumable admirer of Voltaire, and an enemy and calumniator of American Catholics, in union with a deist like Franklin, asking a Congress of our States, which had almost all framed most oppressive laws against Catholics, to name a Bishop acceptable to it—who was to be a foreigner, living abroad under a foreign King, to administer from France the ecclesiastical affairs of this country; and, what is most amazing (for that, too, is specified)—from ecclesiastics who should be acceptable to its notions of ecclesiastical fitness. It appears incredible did we not read it all in the letter of Franklin to the Nuncio, July 28, 1783, with the Nuncio's acquiescence, the note to the French Prime Minister, Vergennes, the 15th of December of the same year, and the proposal to congress, May 1784. . . . Knowing of the machinations of Marbois to get control of everything ecclesiastical here, for political purposes, it would be strange indeed if some among them [the Fathers of Maryland] had not that view [that a bishop was not yet desirable]. They must have been aware that other plotters were at work just as well as Marbois. That such was their apprehension is explicitly stated by Shea, and their forebodings were fully verified by the events.

After the discussion of Gilmary Shea's aspersions on Barbé-Marbois, it is hardly necessary to review in detail Campbell's admittedly second-hand account of the part played by the French Chargé d'Affaires. Where Shea was wrong, Campbell, who follows him, cannot be right, and we see in Campbell's version an example of the length to which an author can go when he lets his imagination and passion obscure his judgment. Where did he find that Barbé-Marbois "began negotiations with Benjamin Franklin and the Apostolic Nuncio"? What ground had he for picturing the French diplomat as "a presumable admirer of Voltaire"? Where

are the traces of Barbé-Marbois' "machinations to get control of everything ecclesiastical" in this country, when the only documents of his ever found strongly advised against "making the choice fall upon a French ecclesiastic," and recommended John Carroll? The author seems to have been as confused about facts as he was about references in support of his thesis, for it was the Nuncio who wrote to Franklin, July 28, 1783, initiating negotiations with the American minister, and not Franklin to the Nuncio; May 1784 was not the date on which a proposal was made to Congress, but that on which Congress directed its answer to the note transmitted by Franklin the previous Fall.

Would that this author who, happily, has to his credit such fine work as *Pioneer Priests of North America* (1908-1911), had better understood the rules laid down in his Society for right thinking—"regulæ ad sentiendum"—to which he refers at the end of his article as "more properly laws for the development of correct instincts," because the instinct for truth would have prompted him to verify the grounds of the charges, gratuitous and unjust, which he directed against an honorable gentleman and a true friend of American Catholics.

E. PETER GUILDAY (1922)

When Dr. Guilday of the Catholic University undertook to revise and bring up to date the monumental work of John Gilmary Shea, he was in possession of practically all the available documents. He had access to Shea's own Propaganda Transcripts; Carl Russell Fish had published in the original Italian, French and Latin the "Documents relative to the Adjustment of the Roman Catholic Organization in the United States to the conditions of National Independence, 1783-1784,"¹⁴ and these documents had appeared a

¹⁴ *American Historical Review*, July, 1910, pp. 801-829.

few months later in English translation by the Reverend E. I. Devitt, S. J.¹⁵ That same year, 1910, had seen the publication by the Reverend Thomas Hughes, S. J. of his *History of the Society of Jesus in North America, Colonial and Federal*, Documents, Vol. I, part II. The learned professor, trained in the best methods of historical research in the University of Louvain, had himself carried on a diligent search of the archives of America, England, Rome and Paris. The only document that seems to have escaped him, and is in the present work added to the dossier of the affair, is an "Observation sur la lettre de M. Franklin à M. le Comte de Vergennes en date du 15 Xbre 1783, par M. l'Evêque d'Autun," endorsed January 4, 1784.¹⁶

Dr. Guilday's manner of dealing with the problem shows on his part an earnest attempt at fairness and objectivity. He indeed confesses (p. 179) that "it is hard to enter upon the story of the effort made in France at this time (1783-1784) to give an organized hierarchy to the Church in the new Republic without considerable suspicion of all concerned." But his whole interpretation of the negotiations is based upon mature consideration of the evidences of the case.

Unlike Gilmary Shea, who seems rather bent on belittling the real Catholicity of France and her government of that period, and who views the French Court as a place "where a pretended philosophy was sapping all religious faith," Dr. Guilday recognizes that at that time France was "a great Catholic country," and Louis XVI "a most Christian King in more than name." He does justice to the character of the Comte de Vergennes, and to the Chevalier de la Luzerne. His aspersions on the "notorious" Talleyrand and his readiness to incriminate Barbé-Marbois are probably the natural reaction of his recollection of the part played by the

¹⁵ In the *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, Vol. XXI, pp. 185-236.

¹⁶ Chapter II, Appendix No. 14, p. 61.

former during the French Revolution. Dr. Guilday shows no little courage in obeying the precept laid to the Catholic historian by Leo XIII, "*Ne quid veri non audeat*," when he produces documents revealing in the colonial Catholics, clergy and laity, a diffidence towards Rome, and particularly towards the Congregation of the Propaganda, which might shock those who lack a thorough acquaintance with real conditions in Rome and America at the end of the eighteenth century. He rightly traces the Jesuits' attitude to the weakness with which Rome yielded to political pressure in 1773, in the suppression of the Society of Jesus. "Their confidence in Rome had received a body-blow but ten years before and they had no special reason to encourage the establishment of a 'foreign power', such as the Congregation de Propaganda Fide was considered to be, over the American Church" (p. 168). To mention only one more important point, Dr. Guilday corrects (p. 185) Gilmary Shea's attributing to a French source Franklin's note to the Nuncio suggesting "the choice that the Court of Rome in concert with the minister of the United States may make of a French Ecclesiastic who, residing in France, may regulate the spiritual affairs of the Catholics . . . in America."

Nevertheless on the essential point of the rôle of France in the negotiation Dr. Guilday follows Gilmary Shea. He devotes a whole chapter (XIII) of his book to the account of the "French Ecclesiastical Interference in the American Church," and having adopted Shea's thesis, he adopts also Shea's characterization of the whole negotiation. It is a "scheme" (pp. 187, 195, 199), an "intrigue" (pp. 173, 175, 177, 188, 189, 199, 212, 230, 240, 241). The terms "conspiracy" and "enslavement" are brought only in quotations from Shea (pp. 177, 194). There is no doubt in the author's mind that a scheme or intrigue was concocted, although he does not seem quite certain of the identity of its originator. At times he refrains from naming that person

(pp. 187, 241), at other times he ascribes the intrigue to some French source (pp. 142, 173, 175, 177, 192, 212, 241); he points an accusative finger at Barbé-Marbois (p. 240), but again lays the responsibility to the Nuncio (p. 189), and to Cardinal Antonelli (p. 239).

For the sake of brevity and clarity Dr. Guilday's reading of the facts will be stated as faithfully as possible, and followed by what we believe to be the true version of these facts; we shall then proceed to an examination of the grounds on which the American historian bases his contention, and shall answer his arguments one by one.

Dr. Guilday's thesis is as follows: When the Prefect of the Propaganda's instructions to the Paris Nuncio for the reorganization of the Church in America at the end of the Revolution were brought to the attention of the French government, someone conceived the plan of using this opportunity to establish more firmly France's influence in the United States, and Franklin was persuaded to lend his support to that plan.

"France," writes Dr. Guilday (p. 182), "had been forced to give up so much for the hard-won independence of the new Republic that it is not surprising to find Franklin willing, probably anxious, partially to recompense France by allowing the French Government to have control over the Church in the United States."

This object could be attained in two ways: first, a French ecclesiastic, residing in France, would "regulate the spiritual affairs of the Catholics who live, or who may come to establish themselves, in those States, through a suffragan residing in America." The suffragan might preferably be an American, but, if no native were available, he would be chosen from among the citizens of a friendly nation, *i. e.* France. The second way would be the establishment of "an American Seminary . . . in one of the sea-coast towns of France" (p. 188) for the education of American seminarians, which would be supported (in Franklin's mind) by the revenues of the

English monastic establishments in France that were to be confiscated for this purpose, or (in the mind of the Nuncio seconded by the French minister and the Bishop of Autun) by the liberality of the French king. This "intrigue," made known to the American Jesuits through their former English associates, was foiled by the move of the American Jesuits petitioning the Holy See for the appointment of one of their own as ecclesiastical superior, and the designation of John Carroll as Prefect Apostolic.

Our reconstruction of the negotiation is very different. For us, at no stage of the negotiation did French authorities take the initiative or make suggestions that would justify historians in denouncing their interference in American Church affairs and *a fortiori* their scheme for the enslavement of American Catholics. Their part in the whole affair was one of generous cooperation with the plans of Rome in a spirit of friendliness to their allies and their fellow-Catholics in the United States. It was the Prefect of Propaganda Fide who, anticipating the lack of American clergymen qualified for the episcopate, suggested in his first Instruction the possibility of having recourse to a French ecclesiastic. It was upon his instructions reiterated again and again, that the Nuncio pleaded with Vergennes and the Bishop of Autun for the admission of American seminarians in a French institution, and for the establishment of a fund to support them. Franklin submitted to the Nuncio the project of a French ecclesiastic residing in France, charged with the regulation of the spiritual affairs of America, and Franklin, in his anxiety to secure the unity of the American government by breaking the bonds between American and English Catholics, and "by taking from the British ministry all influence over the subjects of the United States," begged the Comte de Vergennes to agree to the appointment of a bishop "who is of this Nation and who may reside here among our Friends" (Letter to Vergennes, December 15, 1783). When called upon to

express his opinion upon Franklin's request, the Bishop of Autun advised caution, as the Nuncio had already claimed for the representative of the Holy See the privilege of exercising supervision over the American Church, and Barbé-Marbois advised even against the appointment of a French bishop in America. Rather little attention was given to that part of the project; the Nuncio's main effort in dealing with the French authorities was directed to finding means of support for the seminarians to be brought to France for their education. The French response to this effort was prompt and generous; hence the French part in the negotiation should not be regarded as one of interference or intrigue, but as one of cooperation, which might, no doubt, redound to the benefit of France, but which was not inspired by mean political motives.

Only a reading of all the documents can bring out in its full force the correctness of this interpretation of the facts. Here, an examination of the main arguments upon which Dr. Guilday seems to have based his thesis must suffice.

These arguments do not appear to be explicitly stated in any part of Dr. Guilday's story of the negotiation, and the reason is obvious. His method of writing is the positive method, and his thesis (which is that of Gilmary Shea) had not been contested since the publication of Shea's *Life of Archbishop Carroll*. It had all the appearances of an established historical truth. Dr. Guilday himself had printed in the *Catholic Historical Review* (July 1920), his chapter on "French Ecclesiastical Interference in the American Church," without raising any question as to the correctness of his views; he could therefore assume that he had given the true version of the negotiations.

On reading Dr. Guilday's account more closely, however, it appears that his conviction can be traced to four main sources which will now be examined.

The first is the authority of John Gilmary Shea. It is from

Shea that Dr. Guilday borrows his estimate of the rôle of Barbé-Marbois. He quotes Shea when the latter denounces the "conspiracy to subject [American Catholics] not to a Superior chosen from among themselves, but to one nominated by the French Court and residing in France" (p. 194), and when Shea describes Franklin as bound to feel "not a little chagrined to find himself made even indirectly the medium of impeaching the loyalty of the Carrolls and other patriotic American Catholics" (p. 199). But it is shown in the preceding section how manifestly wrong Gilmary Shea was in his estimate of Barbé-Marbois, and we are assured that Dr. Guilday feels we have proven our case in favor of the French *Chargé d'Affaires*.

The second source of Dr. Guilday's conviction seems to have been the authority of Father Charles Plowden, the English Jesuit. He writes (p. 189): "We know that the French vicar-apostolic project was first made known to Carroll through former English associates." There does indeed exist a letter from Plowden to Carroll²⁷ in which he speaks of the note delivered to the Nuncio as betraying "the policy of the French ministry ('the nation most friendly to congress'), who, by bringing forward a Frenchman or perhaps an Irish-Frenchman, would use religion as an instrument to increase their own influence in America." In the next place we must take into account the fact that Plowden had no first-hand information of the nature of the negotiation, and that John Carroll does not seem to have allowed himself to be influenced by his friend's report of the French intrigue, since he continued to depend on the friendly cooperation of the French agents in the United States.

The third ground of the author's suspicion of French interference is Talleyrand's participation in the negotiation. What good could be expected from this notorious character? And yet the part he played reveals rather wisdom and gener-

²⁷ Chapter V, Appendix 1, p. 145.

osity. When the Comte de Vergennes referred the Nuncio to him on the matter of the education and support of the American seminarians, he gave unstinted cooperation to that object; and when the Minister submitted to him Franklin's insistent request for the appointment of a French bishop for the United States, he maintained a prudent reserve.

Perhaps the most compelling factor of Dr. Guilday's conviction that the Paris negotiations had the character of intrigue is the secrecy with which they were conducted. The Doctor sees a connection between the Whitemarsh meeting of June 27, 1783, and the request at the end of the Nuncio's letter to the Prefect of September 1, 1783. He writes (pp. 188-189):

News of the proceedings of the June meeting had no doubt been reported to the Nuncio, for his letter of September 1, 1783, as has been seen above, contains a rather emphatic suggestion that silence on the whole plan should be kept: "On the other hand, Your Eminence will deign to inform neither the ecclesiastic just mentioned (the superior of the Mission in the United States) nor any one else, with the exception of the Holy Father, of my negotiations with the Count de Vergennes, and with Monseigneur the Bishop of Autun, since it is a question as yet, of mere project, of which it would not be well to speak before it be realized, or developed sufficiently not to be frustrated by anyone who may regard the proposed establishment unfavorably."

There is no doubt that if these lines are read by one who has already accepted the idea of an intrigue in which the Nuncio was implicated, such a recommendation of secrecy will appear as a strong confirmation of the suspicion that the parties to the affair were really scheming and conscious that their scheme was bound to meet with opposition. That inference, however, would not be legitimate, as the reader will doubtless admit, if he considers the real object of the recommendation.

In the first place, it is extremely doubtful that scarcely two months after the Whitemarsh meeting, news of its proceed-

ings could have reached Paris. None of the official messages we have been able to trace in that period crossed the ocean in so short a time, and one wonders through what channel the news could have reached the Nuncio. But what was the tenor of the Nuncio's letter, and what was the object of his negotiations with the French minister and the Bishop of Autun regarding which he advises secrecy? The letter is the first report of the Nuncio to the Prefect after his exchange of notes with Franklin. Of the several suggestions made to him by Franklin he rejects that of appointing a French bishop to regulate the spiritual affairs of American Catholics, as well as that of confiscating the English Benedictine establishments in France. He retains only the project of entrusting to a French bishop the task of providing means for the training of missionaries for America, and this is the one suggestion of Franklin that he reports having discussed with the Comte de Vergennes and Talleyrand.

Why, then, should secrecy be observed regarding a project which placed France in the honorable position of a benefactor? Discretion is quite natural at the first stage of a negotiation. It was as yet a mere project, and the Nuncio did not wish to see jeopardized by untimely publicity the success of the plan to which he and the Prefect attached such importance throughout the entire proceedings. Discretion was imperative regarding the prelate in charge of the American mission, because he was the Vicar-Apostolic of London. He could hardly be expected to look favorably upon steps taken by the Holy See for the consummation, on ecclesiastical lines, of a break between the American colonies and Great Britain before the actual signature of the treaty recognizing the independence of the United States, and this in conformity with the wishes expressed by the American minister, and with the cooperation of France.

The same discretion was observed towards the London prelate a few months later by the Holy See when it proceeded

to the appointment of the American Prefect Apostolic, for it contented itself with notifying Bishop Talbot of the cessation of his jurisdiction over the United States. It was likewise observed by the American clergy themselves; they did not think it necessary to seek the approbation of the Vicar-Apostolic from whom they had received their faculties, before they proceeded in their own way to reorganize their missions along purely national lines. The discretion of which Dr. Guilday makes capital appears quite natural, and not as an evidence of intrigue.

We have dealt with such grounds of Dr. Guilday's thesis as can be gathered from his presentation of the case in his *Life of John Carroll*. With his permission we shall now examine some other grounds of his conviction to which he has not given expression in his writings.

He wonders whether we make enough of the fact that the *pourparlers* in Paris might have resulted in the appointment over American Catholics of a bishop (presumably a French ecclesiastic), living in France and training his future clergy in a French seminary, and might thus have retarded if not altogether jeopardized the establishment of a truly independent American hierarchy. Remembering the close association between the Church of France and the American ex-Jesuits, practically all of whom had been educated in the French college of St. Omer, and the French clergy's contribution to the American cause in 1780, he is inclined to connect in his mind these facts with what looks on the surface like an attempt to set up in France ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the American Church, and to feel that the Bishop of Autun, who was one of the chief officials in the *Assemblée du Clergé*, may have been prompted by the thought of the French clergy's contribution to desire to man the American Church. The French missionaries might have shown the truly apostolic zeal that animated the great Bishop Cheverus and

the saintly Bishop Flaget, but the American Church might have become a dependency of the Church of France.

As Dr. Guilday rightly concludes, "This is a mere surmise." All these motives may have influenced the Bishop of Autun and the other Frenchmen who took part in the negotiation, but there is no evidence that they did. It can only be repeated here, that the reading of all available evidence has led to the conclusion that at no stage of the proceedings did French officials take the initiative of proposing what might be called a French scheme, that their attitude all through those months was one of response, now prompt, now rather cautious, to the appeals presented to them either by the Papal Nuncio or by the American Minister, and that they should be absolved of the charge of intrigue or undue interference. No doubt they played a part in the project, but it was a part that could be expected, under the circumstances, from a nation whose Catholic faith disposed her to meet the desires of the supreme authority in the Church, and whose friendship made her ready to assume new burdens in behalf of the sister-nation she had helped render independent.

No doubt, had John Gilmary Shea lived, he would have retracted his indignant denunciation of the rôle of France in the establishment of the American hierarchy, and regretted having charged her with scheming "the enslavement of American Catholics," and it is earnestly to be hoped that Dr. Guilday, in a new edition of his *Life and Times of John Carroll* will not perpetuate the myth contained in his present chapter on "French Ecclesiastical Interference in the American Church."

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